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

In Five Volumes, complete.

Bolingbroke, Henry St. John

London, 1754

Some reflections on the present state of nation, principally with regard to her taxes and her debts, and on the causes and consequences of them.

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S O M E
R E F L E C T I O N S
O N
The Present STATE of the NATION,
Principally with Regard to
Her TAXES and her DEBTS,
A N D O N
The CAUSES and CONSEQUENCES of them.

“ Mihi autem non minori curae est qualis respublica post mortem
“ meam futura fit, quam qualis hodiè fit.” Cic. in Lael.

S O M E
R E F L E C T I O N S

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The Present STATE of the NATION,

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A N D O N

The CAUSES and CONSEQUENCES of them.

SINCE we are got out of a war the least successful, and the most expensive, that this nation ever made; after having taken part threescore years together, like principal actors, in all the other wars and all the negotiations of the continent; it is time surely, that we recal our attention home-wards, and consider the present state of our own country, particularly with respect to her taxes and her debts, to the nature and application of the former, to the rise and progress of the latter, to the necessity and to the means of diminishing both.

THE revolution of our government in one thousand six hundred and eighty eight, makes a most remarkable æra in the history of Britain on many accounts, and on none more than on that which is the subject of these papers. The public revenue, in net money, amounted at that time to no more than two millions annually, which were sufficient to defray the ordinary ex-

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pences of the crown, as well as to maintain a fleet, and a greater army than was necessary for the defence of the country at that time. This revenue was raised without any tax on land or malt, and by a very few of those innumerable duties which have been since laid, to the oppression of the landed and mercantile interest of the nation. These duties have been so mortgaged too, that we are unable, at this time, to send a cock-boat to sea, or to keep a single centinel at Whitehall-gate without a land-tax.

THE public debts, that of the bankers included, amounted to little more than 300,000 *l.* at the beginning of this aera. They amount now to fourscore millions. To discover how this great change in our national circumstances has been brought about is surely an object of reasonable, and may be such of useful, curiosity.

KING WILLIAM engaged in a necessary war with France as soon as he came to the throne. It was necessary that he should maintain the revolution he had made, and assert his right to the crown he had acquired by the best of all titles, the free gift of a people whom he had delivered from impending destruction, from popery and slavery. This war might be thought necessary too in another respect.

FROM the treaty of Westphalia, and from the Pyrenean, to the accession of king WILLIAM to our throne, the power and ambition of France had grown up together, and were become exorbitant. No efforts had been made sufficient to reduce, scarce any sufficient to resist, the former. No measures had been concerted, no preparations had been made, to disappoint the latter in that great object, the acquisition of the Spanish monarchy to the house of Bourbon. From the revolution this alarm was taken, which should have been taken sooner. The
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spirit of our court was changed, the eyes of our people were opened, and all men saw how necessary it was to preserve, in concert with the Spaniards, the succession of their monarchy to the house of Austria, instead of suffering it to fall into that of Bourbon, which was excluded from it by the most solemn engagements.

QUEEN ANNE came to the throne at the eve of another great war, of a war against France and Spain, which her predecessor was ready to undertake, tho he had not actually declared it when he died, in order to procure some reasonable satisfaction to the emperor, for a succession which had been then lost to his family by his own fault.

KING WILLIAM, who engaged for so much more in the first grand alliance, would engage for no more than this in the second. But the private interest of her ministers, the intrigues of her allies, and the rashness of a party, drew the queen much further: and it must be confessed that a subserviency to the court of Vienna, which has cost us so dear, began in her time, not in king WILLIAM's, tho her heart was, what she declared it to be, entirely English, and tho he was censured, I think very unjustly, for too great regard to foreign interests and too little for those of Britain.

THE war king WILLIAM waged was not very successful; and yet if the emperor would have consented to send his second son into Spain during the life of Charles the second, king WILLIAM would have succeeded in both the objects of this war. He had maintained himself on the throne, and had obliged France to promise that she would not disturb him in the possession of it. As to the other object, no treaties of partition would have been thought necessary by him in that case; nei-

ther would this nation have had any thing more to do, when the Spanish succession was open, than to support, with the concurrence of that whole nation, an Austrian prince who was actually on the spot with an Austrian army, and who had been already declared presumptive heir. Thus we might have had a defensive war to make with great advantages on our side; and the events of the offensive war, which we were obliged to make afterwards, shew sufficiently what would have been the success of the other. The councils of Vienna laid us wantonly, if I may say so, under great disadvantages: and king WILLIAM therefore resolved, like a wise prince, to expose neither this country nor his own to the hard task of recovering the whole Spanish monarchy out of the hands of PHILIP. He accommodated his system to the circumstances of the time; and aimed at no more now than to force the French and Spaniards to come into some composition about the Austrian pretensions, about trade, about barriers, and about effectual means to hinder a future union of France and Spain under one monarch.

THIS was all that he meant. But they who delighted in war, because they hoped to get immensely by it, and they who amused themselves and others with vain speculations, about a thing very real in itself, about a ballance of power, ensnared both England and Holland into engagements for dethroning PHILIP and setting up CHARLES in his room, tho we had acknowledged the former, tho the Castilians were strongly attached to him, and tho he was in quiet possession of the Spanish dominions in both hemispheres. Flattered by groundless hopes of a revolution in favor of his rival, and flushed by the first success of our arms, this precipitate engagement was approved and supported by us, notwithstanding the absurd conduct of the emperor and the wise reserve of king
WILLIAM,

WILLIAM, both of which should have put us more on our guard, and have made us less sanguine.

IT is perhaps worth while to make an observation in this place, which was made at the time we speak of by Spaniards who acknowledged PHILIP the fifth, in compliance with the will of CHARLES the second, and yet were averse to the influence and authority which France assumed over them. They observed, that CROMWEL had forced them to give their infant to LEWIS the fourteenth, by joining his arms with those of France against them, and that we went about to force them, half a century afterwards, by a new war, to an absolute dependence on France.

THE court of Vienna, desirous to acquire the Italian dominions, and too indifferent about Spain and the West-Indies, made her profit of our rashness. She left the whole weight of the war on England and Holland. She did worse. She not only neglected the war by contributing little or nothing to it, except the name of Austria and the claims of that family; she sacrificed the success of the common cause, for so it was called improperly enough by her, whenever any little inferior interest that seemed to be hers more immediately came in the way; by which she not only prolonged the war, but increased the annual expence of it to England and Holland, without taking any share in this expence on herself that deserves to be mentioned.

EXPERIENCE was lost upon us. Our political delirium continued. It grew in some sort habitual by the artifice employed at home, and by the victories obtained abroad. The war languished however upon the whole, notwithstanding our utmost efforts; the weight of Austria grew every year heavier
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on us, whilst that of Spain grew every year lighter on France; the Spaniards were able to defend themselves against us at last, and the success of our enemies in Spain made them amends for our victories in Flanders.

THE dethronement of PHILIP in favor of CHARLES, was become evidently a chimerical project in the year 1710, at the latest, and it became in the following year so ineligible by the death of the emperor JOSEPH, to whom his younger brother CHARLES succeeded, that one cannot conceive the men who clamored for it, even then to have been in earnest; since their aim, in that case, must have been to set the Imperial and Spanish crowns on the same head, against the common interest of Europe and the fundamental principle of the war.

BUT tho we could not conquer Spain by a war, we might have reduced the exorbitant power of France by a peace. We might have stripped her of that barrier wherein this exorbitant power consisted chiefly, as every man, who knew what he meant when he talked of this exorbitant power, must have intended. We might have laid her as open to the incursions of her neighbours, as her neighbours were to hers: as open as she had been when a prince CASIMIR, or any other general of Reitres, could penetrate without a siege, and sometimes without a battle, into the heart of her provinces.

BUT we would not do the latter, because we could not do the former. We acted like men who thought that the exorbitant power of one family could not be reduced, unless a power as exorbitant was raised in another; and who never looked back to preceding centuries to consider the usurpations, the tyranny, and the bigotry that the house of Austria had exercised

cised in the fulness of her power, and would exercise again if she was ever restored to the same.

WE were disappointed in our great political views, after two wars that had lasted twenty-five years with a very short interval between them. We had done our utmost to defeat that scheme of ambition France had opened to herself, and of danger to all her neighbours, by the Pyrenean treaty: and, tho' this danger affected us less than any other nation engaged in the alliance, we had exhausted ourselves to maintain it.

WHEN king WILLIAM entered, immediately after the revolution, on this great scene of action; the unincumbered condition of this nation, which has been hinted at above, was such, that he might have been supported in it by good management, as profusely as he was, and even more effectually, by the revenue then subsisting, by a land-tax, by the excise on malt, and by some additional subsidies, all of which would have been raised within the year. A scheme of this kind was prepared and offered. It was allowed to be practicable: but it was rejected for a reason that appeared plausible in political refinement, and has proved most pernicious in its consequences. It was said that a new government, established against the ancient principles and actual engagements of many, could not be so effectually secured any way, as it would be if the private fortunes of great numbers were made to depend on the preservation of it; and that this could not be done unless they were induced to lend their money to the public, and to accept securities under the present establishment. Thus the method of funding and the trade of stock-jobbing began. Thus were great companies created, the pretended servants, but in many respects the real masters of every administration.

I DO not pretend to determine how far the wisdom of our legislature might have provided, at the beginning of the new war, against the growth and spreading of that cancerous humor, which had begun to gnaw our vitals in the former. All I am to observe is, that, a moneyed interest being firmly established by this time, and such numbers being accustomed to make immense profit at the public expence, there is no room to wonder if we proceeded on the same plan during the reign of queen ANNE. We did so: and the debts contracted in this war, being added to those of the former, the whole of our debt amounted to little less than fifty millions.

HAVING accumulated so immense a debt, the queen put an end to the war. She could not attempt to alter the system of it whilst it continued, without throwing the whole alliance into confusion, after some of the principal allies had declared, on the death of JOSEPH, that they would not consent CHARLES should be king of Spain as well as emperor.

THE interest of Britain required, no doubt, that we should turn our eyes from the continent to our own island, and that we should improve the opportunity and the advantages which a peace gave us. Whatever prejudices have been propagated industriously against that of Utrecht, thus much at least is certain. We were obliged no longer by treaties to assume any other part in the affairs of the continent, than that which the immediate interest of our country required. The opportunity and the means of diminishing taxes, reviving commerce, and paying debts were open to us.

THIS pacific scheme ought to have been pursued, no doubt, till we had retrieved our affairs, and recovered our former
2 strength

strength in some good degree, and till we were prepared to take any part in future events which our honor or interest might require. Nay, this scheme was the more necessary to be pursued; if France was left too powerful, no matter by whose fault, as I am ready to admit that she was; and if the two branches of Bourbon were to be looked upon in this century, like the two branches of Austria in the last, as inseparable allies, united by blood and by joint ambition. It was the more easy to be pursued too, because a long minority was beginning in France, and many other circumstances of characters and of situation extremely favorable to it concurred in that court and country.

THIS should have been the scheme of our policy: but unhappily it was not. The late king, as elector of Hanover, had reason, no doubt, to desire the acquisition of Bremen and Verden. Our nation contributed to it with her money, and forced it with her arms; tho it was made in contradiction to the engagements that the crown of England had taken when king WILLIAM gave his guaranty to the treaty of Travendal. This acquisition became the first link of a political chain, by which we were dragged back into new and expensive broils, the consequences whereof we feel at this hour.

WHEN the king acquired these dutchies, it became necessary to procure the investiture of them: and I will say, because I can demonstrate, that these investitures might have been procured, and the emperor flattered with the acquisition of Sicily, by measures as effectual, and much more consistent with former treaties and the public tranquillity, than those that were taken. The house of Austria sacrificed the success of the war to the immediate acquisition of Naples. We sacrificed all the advantages of the peace, to procure her that of Sicily in the manner we did procure it. I have heard it said,

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whilst these affairs were in transaction, that the treaty of quadruple alliance would complete that of Utrecht. But the event has shewn, and it was obvious to foresee, that one of these treaties would unravel the system of the other. If we had maintained the neutrality of Italy, as we were obliged to do by treaty, even indulging the emperor in the acquisition of Sicily, and yielding to the house of Savoy the eventual successions which we stipulated should be given to Spain, the intention of the treaty of Utrecht would have been preserved, and France by concurring in these measures would have shewn her sincerity in maintaining the settlement of Europe. But when she became a party to the quadruple alliance, she meant nothing more than to give the Spanish branch of Bourbon an opportunity of reannexing to that crown the Italian dominions: and we were grossly her bubbles when we triumphed that she entered into the quadruple alliance, and made a sham war to oblige PHILIP to accede to it.

As long, then, as there were hopes of obtaining an extraordinary investiture of Bremen and Verden, we flattered the emperor at no small expence. As soon as it became apparent that this investiture could be obtained in no other manner than it had been granted formerly, we insulted him. We imputed to him designs, he has constantly disowned, and we have never proved; after which we complained of his ingratitude, we threatened war, and we prepared for it by maintaining with great profusion a standing army of Hessians in Germany. The same men, who complained so lately that France had been left too powerful by the treaty of Utrecht, and that great danger would arise from her close connection with Spain, complained now of the too great power of the house of Austria, and of the danger that would arise from a good understanding between the emperor and king PHILIP. In short, our politics were not only variable, but incomprehensible to every man who knew the state and interest
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of Great Britain, but was not so well apprised of the several turns of interest which were to be served abroad.

WHEN our ministers had once departed from the strait line of British policy, the difficulty of returning to it became every year greater, and the inclination every year less. We continued busy and bustling in every court of Europe. We negotiated against the emperor in concert with France, and gave her thereby the means of regaining more of that credit and influence in the empire which she had formerly had, than she could have acquired without our assistance. We contrived to make peace abroad almost as chargeable to us as war. Abuses of every kind were suffered at home. Trade was neither eased nor encouraged, and the gradual payment of our debt was utterly neglected by a minister rather desirous to keep his country under this oppression, than ignorant of the means to deliver her from it. Whilst we acted in this manner, France grew frugal, she made the debts she could not pay fit more lightly on her, she raised her credit, and she extended her commerce. In short, her strength increased, and ours diminished. We were reduced to a state of weakness we had never felt before; and this very weakness was urged as a reason for bearing tamely the losses our merchants sustained, and all the affronts our government received, lest we should be drawn into a war by using reprisals, the common right of nations.

As tame as we were, the insolence of the Spaniards, the reasonable impatience of our merchants, and this very tameness of our government, made a sea-war unavoidable, just before the death of the emperor CHARLES the sixth; which event brought the principal powers of Europe into the field, set the whole continent in a flame, and formed one of those conjunctures wherein our honor and interest may oblige us to

take a part, and for which therefore we should always be prepared.

WE were in no degree so prepared, after six or seven and twenty years of peace; and yet when we took a part, we took the most lavish and the most impolitic that we could take. It was a miserable part by sea at first, and thro' the whole course of the war by land. I shall recal neither what we did, nor what we neglected to do; and I wish, for the honor of my country, that the whole may be buried in oblivion. Thus much only it is to my purpose to observe. First, That our councils seemed to be the echoes of those free-booters, TRENCK and MENTZEL, who talked of nothing less than conquering the two Alsacias and the three bishopricks, and of laying Champagne waste, whilst all our offensive projects on the Rhine were daily disappointed: and secondly, That we declined all overtures of peace, when the seat of the war was transferred, with great advantage to France, from Germany to the Netherlands, where we resolved to wage it whether the Dutch would or no, and where we were beat on every spot on which my lord MARLBOROUGH had conquered.

EVERY defeat in this war, like every triumph in the last, became a reason for continuing it: and this management, when no avowable reason could be given for it, gave suspicious and refining persons occasion to throw out a great deal of slander; for such I hope it was. In short, whatever the reasons were, we continued this inauspicious war so long, and we pushed it so far beyond our strength; that we were within a few months of bankruptcy, when the French granted us, miraculously, the same terms that they would have granted two or three years before: and when they might have marched without much trouble or opposition, after taking Maestricht, into the

heart of the Seven Provinces: for our last resource, a Muscovite army, was too far off to have enabled ours to make a stand.

By making the war in the low countries almost wholly at our own expence, and without any prospect of success, we meant to cause such a diversion to the forces of France as might leave Germany nothing to fear on the Rhine, and as might give time and opportunity to the empress queen to drive the French and Spaniards out of Lombardy. We sacrificed ourselves for these purposes: but in this war, as in the last, the court of Vienna sacrificed nothing. From the time the French had been obliged, more by the sickness of their troops and the ill conduct of their generals, than by the force of her arms, to abandon Germany, the empress queen seemed to make war just as it suited her conveniency, to save all the expence she could in the Netherlands, to plunder all she could in Italy, and to make us pay the whole immense subsidies which we gave her for both.

In the Netherlands we were outnumbered vastly by the deficiencies of her quotas: and in Italy, where we had thrown the Genoese into the arms of France and Spain, with great and just indignation against us for the treaty we had made at Worms, and had, however, obliged them to submit after the battle of Placentia, we lost the whole advantage of it by the insatiable avarice and extreme brutality of the Austrians. Yet we continued our efforts on that side still; and the sham siege of Genoa, for it was no more, and the harmless invasions of Provence and Dauphiny had no other meaning than to amuse and impose on us in the excess of our zeal.

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OUR expences in every part of this strange war, particularly in the Netherlands, were made without measure, because without controul; as they will be soon convinced who look into the artillery, forage, hospital, and other contingent accounts. The parliamentary aids from the year one thousand seven hundred and forty exclusively, to the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-eight inclusively, amount to 55,522,959l. 16s. 3d. and the new debt we have contracted to more than thirty millions, which are near twenty millions more of debt than France has contracted in the same time: a sum that will appear incredible to future generations, and is so almost to the present. There are three Reflections to be made on this state, which must add to our astonishment. First, That the greatest part of this vast expence has been granted on account of the war, chiefly since there remained no reason for continuing it; that is, since the time when it was in our power to have a peace at least as good as that we have now obtained; and I place this aera no higher than the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-seven inclusively, tho I might place it higher, perhaps, on very good grounds. Secondly, That the debt contracted in it exceeds by much that of king WILLIAM's, or that of queen ANNE's war; tho both of them were much longer, and the last not only more widely spread, but carried into countries the distance of which and many other circumstances increased every article of our expence extraordinarily. Thirdly, That we have thrown, by our negotiations and by the late war, into the hands of the house of Bourbon much more dominion in Italy, than would have induced the French at Gertruydenberg to have recalled PHILIP, and to have given up Spain and the Indies; which they were ready to do at those conferences, as Buys and Vanderdussen acquainted the ministers of the allies, in making one of their reports to that assembly.

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BAD as our condition is, let us not despair. Not to despair of the commonwealth, whatever her condition be, is the principle of a true patriot, that is, of a faithful servant to his prince and country: and we may find an example to this purpose, which deserves to be quoted, in a book that is in the hands of most people, and that I hope is not unread at court, I mean the duke of SULLY's memoirs. In them we find that HENRY the fourth turned his whole application to every thing that might be useful or even convenient to his kingdom, without suffering things that happened out of it to pass unobserved by him, as soon as he had put an end to the civil wars of France, and had concluded a peace with Spain at Vervins. Is there a man, either prince or subject, who can read without the most elevated and the most tender sentiments the language he held to SULLY at this time, when he thought himself dying of a great illness he had at Monceaux? "My friend!" said he, "I have no fear of death. You, who have seen me expose my life so often, when I might so easily have kept out of danger, know this better than any man. But I must confess that I am unwilling to die, before I have raised this kingdom to the splendor I have proposed to myself; and before I have shewn my people that I love them like my children, by discharging them from a part of the taxes that have been laid on them, and by governing them with gentleness."

THE state of France was then even worse than the state of Great Britain is now, the debts as heavy, many of the provinces entirely exhausted, and none of them in a condition of bearing any new imposition. The standing revenues brought into the king's coffers no more than thirty millions, tho an hundred and fifty millions were raised on the people: so great were

were the abuses of that government in raising of money, and they were not less in the dispensation of it. The whole scheme of the administration was a scheme of fraud, and all who served, cheated the public, from the highest offices down to the lowest, from the commissioners * of the treasury down to the under-farmers and the under-treasurers. SULLY beheld this state of things, when he came to have the sole superintendancy of affairs, with horror. He was ready to despair: but he did not despair. Zeal for his master, zeal for his country, and this very state seemingly so desperate, animated his endeavours: and the noblest thought, that ever entered into the mind of a minister, entered into his. He resolved to make, and he made, the reformation of abuses, the reduction of expences, and a frugal management, the sinking fund for the payment of national debts, and the sufficient fund for all the great things he intended to do, without overcharging the people.

HE succeeded in all. The people were immediately eased, trade revived, the king's coffers were filled, a maritime power was created, and every thing necessary was prepared to put the nation in a condition of executing great designs, whenever great conjunctures should offer themselves. Such was the effect of twelve years wise and honest administration: and this effect would have shewed itself in great enterprizes against the house of Austria, more formidable in those days than the house of Bourbon has been in ours; if HENRY the fourth had not been stabbed by one of those assassins into whose hands the interest of this house, and the frenzy of religion, had put the dagger more than once.

WHEN we consider, in these memorials, and in others which are come down to us, the deplorable condition to which

* Conseillers dans le conseil des finances.

which France was reduced at the end of the sixteenth century, we feel some of that horror which SULLY himself felt, and are ready to confess that the ruin of that kingdom, bankruptcy and confusion, must have followed; if the opportunity, which this peaceful conjuncture gave, had not been improved immediately, and as wisely, and as vigorously as it was. Shall we not see our own deplorable condition, and the necessary consequences of it in the same light? Shall we not be much more strongly affected by them? Are we not as near to bankruptcy as the French nation was at that time, and much more so than they are at this time? May not confusion follow it here as well as there? And finally, may not the joint ambition of two branches of Bourbon in some future conjuncture produce effects as fatal, and much more so to us, if we continue in our present state of impotence till such a conjuncture happens, as were to be feared by France at the time we speak of from the joint ambition of two branches of Austria? In short, we have much to apprehend, unless we have the courage and the virtue to probe our domestic wounds to the bottom, and to apply immediately not palliative, but the most specific remedies. If we do this; instead of fearing others, we may become once more formidable ourselves. But this is certain, that they, who get first out of a distress common to us and to our neighbours, will give the law to the rest.

It may be said, that we have no SULLIES among us. I shall not take on me to determine whether we have or no. But I will venture to say, after SULLY himself, that altho good princes may be wanting to good ministers; yet good ministers will never be wanting to a prince who has discernment enough to find them, who chooses them for their superior parts, experience, and integrity; and who resolves to support them,

as HENRY the fourth supported SULLY, against favorite mistresses, the cabals of the court, and the factions of the state.

It may be said again, that a king of France has power enough by the constitution of that government to support a minister who checks corruption, reforms abuses, and maintains a frugal management of the public revenue. But it may be asked, how a minister, who should undertake this, could be supported in a government like ours, where he would be sure to have for his enemies all those who have shared so long the public spoils, or who hope to share them, and where these enemies would have the means and opportunities of supplanting him, notwithstanding the protection of his master? I answer, by the parliament. How many ministers have there been, to whom much national mischief was imputed justly, and no one national good could be ascribed, and who were long supported by the favor of the crown, and by the concurrence of the two houses, which this favor and their own management procured them? Shall these supports be sufficient for a wicked or a weak minister; and shall innocence and ability, with the same favor and better management, be reckoned for nothing? I cannot think so ill, even of the present age, as degenerate as it is. It is degenerate no doubt: but I have heard men complain of this degeneracy, who promoted it first, and sought their excuse in it afterwards.

THE delegated power of a minister, under the legal prerogatives of the crown, is sufficient to carry on a system of reformation and frugality in the ordinary course of things, if the minister really intends it: and whenever extraordinary powers are wanting for extraordinary operations, as they must be in such a state as ours, they will be effectual, if granted; and if refused, they who refuse them, not the minister,

nister, will suffer by the refusal, and be answerable to the nation for it. The moneyed man may continue to enjoy a little more revenue by this refusal: but his fortune will be more precarious, and more liable to some future reverse. The merchant will continue to trade, the landed man to plow and sow, without even a prospect of being relieved from their fer- vitude, not for the honest creditors alone, but for usurers and stock-jobbers, for those leeches who fill themselves continually with the blood of the nation, and never cease to suck it. The nation in the mean time will be reduced to the ut- most poverty: and it behoves those particularly, who have brought us so near it, to shew that this was not their object, by concurring zealously with those who have used and will continue to use their best endeavours to prevent it.

THE difficulties we have to struggle with would not be so great as they are, notwithstanding the immense profusion to which the late war gave occasion and pretence; if we did not feel in this instance, as we feel in others, the fatal conse- quences of a precedent administration. The payment of our debts might have been easily provided for in that time: nay, fourteen years, which are little more than two thirds of it, would have been sufficient to reduce them to twenty millions. If this had been done, the memory of the person who was at the head of that administration, and had the sole power of it, might have deserved honor.

LET us nourish in ourselves, and cultivate in others, senti- ments more elevated than these, and more worthy of the British genius. The greater our national distress and danger are, the greater should the efforts be of every particular man to relieve his country from one, and thereby to guard it against the other. We are in a crisis that must turn either to

life or death, and that cannot turn to the former unless remedies are applied much more effectual than those of mountebanks, who find their account in palliating evils and in prolonging diseases. To palliate and to prolong would be, in our case, to kill, or to do something worse than kill, to break our constitution entirely, to render an accidental illness habitual and incurable.

ONE or two shillings in the pound, it is said, will be lessened this year upon land; and whatever is wanting for the current service, over and above the two shillings that remain, and the malt, will be borrowed on the credit of the sinking-fund at three per cent. The bait will be tempting; for so must every diminution of taxes be to those who have crouched so long under the weight of so many. But I may venture to say, that it will be no more than a bait; and that they who swallow it will have reason to repent of their rashness, when they find, as they will find very probably, that the natural effect of such measures must prevent the discharge of any considerable part of our debt, except in a term of years much longer than the prosperity and even the safety of our government admits.

I SAY the safety, as well as the prosperity: and some reflections very plain and obvious, tho' made by few, will justify me for saying so. As to the first, trade gave us wealth, wealth gave us power, and power raised our island to be, at one time, a match for France. If we desire to return into the same state, we must return by the same steps which raised us to it: and he, who should make a scheme for the payment of our debts, without a principal regard to the improvement of our trade, would make a very silly scheme. But it would be just

as silly to make a scheme for both, in such a manner, as would render neither practicable.

THE necessity of diminishing taxes, in order to improve our trade, becomes a good reason, not for the strange purpose to which it is applied by some, but for hastening all the operations necessary to sink our debts, in order to hasten that diminution of taxes which will become practicable, when a part of our debt is sunk, and which will facilitate extremely the discharge of the rest. The truth is, that if we defer these operations too long, we may be never able to perform them with equal advantage, nor, by keeping pace with our neighbours, to renew our strength, as fast as they are intent to renew theirs. Our neighbours have suffered by former wars, and have been exhausted by the last as well, tho' I apprehend not so much, as we. France, for instance, has contracted in the late war no more than one third of the additional debt we have contracted in it, as I believe on very good authority: and she has been able to assign funds, which pay the interest of this debt regularly, and sink yearly a part of the principal. I am not so well apprised of the actual state of Spain. But the treasures of the West Indies are poured into her daily; and as she has been long recovered, or recovering, from her antient indolence and ignorance, she seems to apply herself to the augmentation of her maritime force, to the improvement of her trade, and even to that of domestic manufactures. In a word, what has been said before may be repeated here: they who get soonest out of the present common distress, will give the law to others, or be at least in a condition of not receiving it from any one.

As to national safety, we shall do well to observe how much the system of dominion and power in Europe is less
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favorable at present to our political interests and views, than it was when we undertook to mend it. Spain was falling, but not fallen into the hands of France, at the beginning of this century : and tho the Spanish nation as well as court gave their monarchy afterwards to a prince of the house of Bourbon, that they might prevent the dismemberment of it ; yet they were averse enough, by long habits of hostility, to a French government. Fortune and we have done so well at last, that these two nations are now closely united by interest and by habit, and that Spain is therefore more than ever estranged from us ; the proofs of which are not only recent, but, I fear, actual.

THE frontier of France has been the great support of her exorbitant power, as wise men foresaw fourscore years ago, when LEWIS the fourteenth began to raise that wall of brass which reaches from the Alps to the Ocean, that it would become. This frontier is now more compact than ever by the acquisition of Lorain. The branches of the house of Bourbon have taken root in Italy as well as in Spain. France has learned by experience to raise and to maintain her credit, and to extend her commerce, for the protection and support whereof she seems more attentive than ever to increase her strength by sea : a strength she will always exert with great advantage over us in some respects, I mean in those of order, frugal management, and strict discipline.

THE whole empire, except Bavaria and Cologne, was attached to us by inclination as well as interest, in the war which began with this century. It is much otherwise now : and we may say, I fear, too truly, that the influence of France in Germany is little inferior to what it was whilst the league of the Rhine subsisted.

THE Dutch commonwealth, our best ally, and in some fort a barrier to Great Britain, is in a state of dissolution; and has not, either without, or within herself, those means of recovery by conjuncture and by character, that she has had on several occasions from the time her government was first formed.

THIS short state may serve to shew how difficult it will be, till we have paid a good part of our debt, and restored our country in some measure to her former wealth and power, to maintain the dignity of Great Britain, to make her respected abroad, and secure from injuries, or even affronts, on the part of her neighbours. This may appear easy, for aught I know, to some men. But sure I am, it would appear difficult to BURLEIGH and WALSINGHAM, if they were to rise from the dead; notwithstanding the success they had in queen ELIZABETH'S reign by doing much at little expence, and by employing management much more than force.

THESE reflections, and such as they suggest naturally to the mind, make it evident, that the future prosperity and safety of this country depend on the speedy diminution of our national debts. Nothing else can secure us effectually against contingent events that may be of fatal consequence to both. Recent experience has shewn how unfit we are become in every respect, except the courage of our common seamen and soldiers, to engage in war. We shall not therefore, I suppose, provoke it easily, or soon. But war may be brought upon us, tho' we should not provoke it, nor go to the continent to seek it. Nay, we may be reduced to the melancholy dilemma of increasing our annual expence to assert our rights, to protect our trade, and to maintain our dignity; or of fitting tamely

tamely down and sacrificing them all. I think, nay I hope, that we should not do the last: and yet we should have much greater difficulties to struggle with in our present situation, than we had in the former, great as they were, if we attempted to do, what was then so shamefully neglected. We cannot increase our expences now, nor shall we be able to do so till some part of our national debt be discharged, without mortgaging on the remainder of the sinking fund, which would soon take away all hope of ever paying any part of this debt, and leave us nothing to mortgage but our land and our malt: whereas if a considerable part of this debt was discharged before any new war broke out, or we were reduced to any such dilemma as I have mentioned; we should find ourselves, whilst it lasted, in a much better condition of defence or offence, and we might be able, as soon as it was over, to resume the same operations, and to proceed in our great domestic concern.

THESE considerations will have great weight with men, who are able to combine, all that is to be combined on such an important occasion, and, by reflecting on the past, and by observing the present, to judge of the future. The only effectual, and therefore necessary, remedies may appear violent, even to them: but they will consider, and every man ought to consider, that if we cannot bear our distemper, and will not bear our cure, the political body must perish. This miserable state will create justly the indignation of mankind. But this indignation should turn against those who have brought us into it, not against those who would deliver us from it. This is the language of reason dictated by public spirit: but private interest and narrow views will dictate another.

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THE moneyed men will complain loudly that they are exposed to perpetual reductions of interest, which have served to no other purpose than to nourish the profusion of successive administrations: and, if this was to continue, their complaints would be just, and the hardships imposed upon them intolerable. It is, therefore, just that neither they should consent to this new reduction of interest, which may be called a new tax upon them, nor the landed men to the continuance of that old and heavy tax on land, unless they have the utmost security that the whole shall be applied to its proper use. There will be still complaints; and we shall hear the melancholy condition to which the widow and the orphan, whose small but sole fortunes are in the funds, will be reduced, most pathetically displayed. The answer will be, however, obvious. If the widow and the orphan, who have their estates in money, suffer by the reduction of interest; the widow and the orphan, who have their estates in land, will suffer by the continuance of the tax upon it: and both one and the other must take their share in the common calamity of their country.

BUT the truth is, that the feeble voice of the widow and the orphan will be little heard. The great din will be raised by stock-jobbers and usurers, by the principal men in our great companies, who, born to serve and to obey, have been bred to command even government itself. These men will roar aloud, and endeavour, by silent intrigue, as well as by noise, to obstruct every measure that tends to emancipate government out of their hands, to make the exchequer, what it ought to be, the great spring of public credit, and the great scene of all transactions relative to public receipts and payments.

LET these men learn therefore to submit, and to reason, as old BATEMAN did, when the reduction of interest was agreed to in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventeen. He told my lord STANHOPE, he was glad this resolution had been taken; because, tho his interest diminished, he should think his principal more secure than ever. On the whole, complaints from this quarter will make little impresson on a minister, who knows that, tho such men have been employed whilst new debts were to be contracted every year, and the public, like an extravagant spendthrift, was obliged to deal with usurers on their own terms; yet they are not to be consulted when debts are to be paid, and the public to be taken out of their hands; who knows, in short, that his arms are longer than theirs, and makes them feel that he will keep, or not keep, measures with them according to their behaviour; who pursues steadily the wise and honest design of rendering his own and every future administration independent of them.

MUCH opposition will arise from two other quarters, the country and the court; in which I should apprehend that the least plausible might be the most successful.

THE landed man will think it hard, that he is not suffered to enjoy a little ease after having bore the burden and heat of the day, during a long course of expensive peace and of ruinous war. All that can be said, to persuade him, that an immediate diminution of the land-tax is contrary to his interest, will pass for deception and paradox. He will be apt to reason like his country tenants, who are always frightened at an immediate expence, tho remote and yet great profit must be the certain consequence of it. Let such a man look back then, and take his lesson from what is past. He will find that,

whilst he winked at profusion because he was flattered by abatements on the land-tax-debts, debts were contracted that have cost him much more, than the continuance of that tax would have cost him. If we look back to the first ten years of his present Majesty's reign, we shall find this very remarkably verified. Let the same man, after he has looked back, look forward again. He will see that, as any diminution of the land-tax to be supplied out of the produce of the sinking fund, or by borrowing even at three per cent. on the credit of it, must prevent, or retard, which may be equivalent to preventing, the discharge of any considerable part of our debt; so he will continue exposed to have the whole tax laid anew, on the first occasion either real or pretended. He may find himself, after a little respite, under the load of the same tax, and of an increased debt: and this may be all he will get by refusing to bear a little longer, for his own sake, and for an important object, what he has boren several years for the sake of others, and for the support of a most unsuccessful war; for such it may be reckoned, after the French were beat at Dettinghen.

ON the other side, if he is wise enough to desire, that the four shillings in the pound be continued for a few years; he will have his share in the common benefits of diminishing public debts, increasing public credit, improving trade, and restoring national prosperity. He may entertain the comfortable hope of a time when he, or his posterity, will have no need of consenting to any tax at all on land in time of peace; since the annual produce of other funds will be sooner or later, in this method, sufficient to defray the annual expence of the government. He may acquire an advantage that will make him ample amends for what it cost him. Such of the taxes, whether of excise or of customs, as bear hardest on the poor

laborers and on our own manufactures, may be reduced, gradually at least, without any considerable interruption of the operations necessary to discharge our national debt: and tho' he is little accustomed to think himself as much affected by other taxes, as he is by the land-tax, he will soon perceive, that a saving on every thing he eats, drinks, or wears, is a lasting and a large repayment of what this tax took from him whilst he consented to continue it. He will find himself a gainer, not only by what he saves in his expences, but by the improvement of his estate; for the whole system of national wealth and prosperity are intimately connected.

THE courtier will complain loudly, authoritatively, and pompously, that any retrenchments on our annual expences may do more hurt, than the saving can do good. But I believe it not hard to shew, that three shillings, or three shillings and sixpence in the pound on land, leaving the rest of the four shillings to go to the sinking fund, would be more than sufficient to answer all necessary expences in time of peace. Wise men are able to do a great deal with a little: every knave or fool is ready to do a little with a great deal. The former know that good policy consists in observing two sorts of oeconomy, the greater and the less: to proportion, by the first, our expences to our circumstances and to those of our neighbours, and to do it with the utmost frugality that these circumstances combined together will admit: to controul, by the second, in the most strict and regular manner, the dispensation of the public treasure from the highest down to the lowest offices of the state. It is of the utmost importance at this time especially, that both these kinds of oeconomy be practised. Our well-being: even our security depends upon them. If we do not pay our debts, we must sink under the load of them: and if we go about to pay them, without practising these two sorts of oeconomy;

oeconomy; the ridiculous figure, which I have seen in a Dutch print, of a man toiling and sweating to cord a rope of hay, whilst an ass bites it off at the other end as fast as he cords it, will be our proper emblem.

EXTREME frugality was one of the means employed by the great minister who has been quoted above: and the success he had, in similar circumstances, should encourage the practice of the same frugality in ours. But he employed another expedient likewise, which is not less necessary here than it was there, nor in our time than it was in his. The expedient I mean, is that of reforming abuses. SULLY rendered this reformation no inconsiderable fund for the payment of public debts. Whether we can do so, as effectually as he did, or no, I determine not. But thus much is certain. Such a reformation will make all future services be carried on at a cheaper rate for the public; and saving is often the surest way of gaining. Materials might be collected, not for a pamphlet, but for a regular treatise under distinct heads, concerning the abuses and corruptions which prevail among us in every part of the public service, and concerning the consequences of them: I know not too whether some work of this kind should not be undertaken, as invidious as it may seem, if nothing is done to reform these abuses, and to extinguish this corruption.

THEY were creeping forward long ago: but since a certain period, they have advanced with very large strides. Frauds were connived at, perhaps encouraged, and corruption was propagated formerly by principal men who had, for the most part, more ambition than avarice, and who raised, by these means, a formidable party that might support them in power. But in process of time, and in favorable conjunctures, the contagion rose higher, and spread still wider; principal
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men became parties to the greatest frauds ; and the highest of those who governed, and the lowest of those who were governed, contributed, in their degrees, to the universal rapine. The greatest particular cheat, whereof any example can be found, was, I believe, that which arrears of subsidies to foreign princes, and arrears of pay to foreign troops, gave the opportunity and the means of executing.

I AM sensible, that the representation I have made of the degeneracy of our age and people, may give occasion to say, that the very things I have been pleading for are impracticable. It will be asked what expectation can be entertained of raising a disinterested public spirit among men who have no other principle than that of private interest, who are individuals rather than fellow-citizens, who prey on one another, and are, in a state of civil society, much like to HOBBS's men in his supposed state of nature ? I must agree, tho unwillingly, that the enterprize is difficult. But the more difficult it is, if nothing less can relieve us from the load of debt we lie under, nor prevent the consequences of lying under it much longer ; every attempt to raise this spirit and to promote these measures, even the weakest, even mine, is commendable. The landed men are the true owners of our political vessel : the moneyed men, as such, are no more than passengers in it. To the first, therefore, all exhortations to assume this spirit should be addressed. It is their part to set the example : and when they do so, they have a right to expect that the passengers should contribute their proportion to save the vessel. If they should prove refractory ; they must be told, that there is a law in behalf of the public, more sacred and more antient too, for it is as antient as political society, than all those under the terms of which they would exempt themselves from any reduction
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of interest, and consequently from any reimbursement of their principal; tho' this reduction and this reimbursement be absolutely necessary to restore the prosperity of the nation, and to provide for her security in the mean time. The law I mean, is that which nature and reason dictate, and which declares the preservation of the commonwealth to be superior to all other laws.

IF such a co-operation of the landed and moneyed interests is once brought about, the way will lie smooth before us, and a prospect of national prosperity at the end of it will open before us yearly. Even the prospect will be of great advantage both at home and abroad. We shall feel it in the rise of our credit, in the confidence which our friends, and in the respect which our enemies, will have for us: a respect that will be due justly to a people who exert so much vigor in the midst of so much distress, and take effectual measures to restore their national strength, and to resume their former dignity, instead of languishing on, under impotence and contempt.

THE man, who is not fired by such considerations as these, must have no elevation of mind, no love for his country, no regard for posterity, nor the least tincture of that public morality which distinguishes a good from a bad citizen. I know that futility, ignorance, and every kind of profligacy are general: but I know too that they are not universal, and therefore I do not despair. In all events, the merit of preserving our country from beggary, is little inferior to that of preserving it from slavery. They who engage therefore in so good a cause, and pursue it steadily in that public spirit, a revival of which can alone save this nation from misery, from oppression, and perhaps from confusion, the usual consequence of the other two; they will deserve better, I presume to say, the title of
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“ultimi Britannorum,” even if they should be defeated by the worst subjects of Britain, than that usurer BRUTUS, and that severe exactor of contributions, CASSIUS, deserved the title of “ultimi Romanorum,” when they were defeated in another manner by the worst citizens of Rome.

AFTER all that has been said in these papers, and all that might be said, concerning the conduct of the house of Austria, from the reign of king WILLIAM to the present time; it may be proper to add something by way of precaution, and to prevent very false conclusions, that many will be ready to draw from very true premises.

IT is notoriously true, that a spirit of bigotry, of tyranny, and of avarice in the court of Vienna, maintained long the troubles in Hungary, which might have been appeased much sooner than they were. Thus a great and constant diversion was kept up in favor of France, even at the time when the two houses of Austria and Bourbon were struggling for that great prize, the Spanish succession, till the French troops took possession of Passau, and the malecontents of Hungary raised contributions in the very suburbs of Vienna.

IT is notoriously true, that we might have had nothing more than a defensive war, as I have said in the foregoing papers, to make against France, with an Austrian prince on the throne of Spain, at the death of CHARLES the second; if the emperor LEOPOLD would have concurred in the wise and practicable measures which king WILLIAM proposed.

IT is notoriously true, that we might have avoided the defeat at Almanza, and have supported much better the war in Spain; if a predilection for acquisitions in Italy had not deter-

determined the councils of Vienna to precipitate the evacuation of Mantua, wherein an army of French was blocked up after the battle of Turin, and which was let loose in this manner, against the opinion of the queen and the states general, time enough to beat us at Almanza.

FINALLY, for I will descend no more to particulars, it is notoriously true, that we might have taken Toulon, and have carried the war into the best provinces of France, for which queen ANNE had made, at a vast expence, all the necessary preparations; if the Austrians had not detached, in that very point of time, twelve thousand men on the expedition to Naples, and if prince EUGENE had not shewn too visibly, before persons still alive, that the taking of Toulon was the least of his objects.

THESE facts are sufficient to shew, how much the mistaken policy of the court of Vienna has over-loaded her allies during more than half a century, and has defeated the great design which these allies, and Britain in particular, carried on for her at the expence of infinite blood and treasure. Now there are many, in this kingdom, very ready to conclude from these facts, and from others of the same kind posterior to these, that our experience should teach us to neglect the interests of the house of Austria, and to be regardless of all that passes on the continent for the time to come. But surely such conclusions are very false. The principle of our conduct has been right, and our manner of pursuing it alone wrong. It was our neglect of the general interest of Europe, from the Pyrenean treaty to the revolution of our government in one thousand six hundred and eighty-eight, that gave to France a long opportunity, and the means of raising an exorbitant power. It has been zeal without knowledge, and a

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strange subserviency to private interests, which have almost exhausted this country, and defeated all our endeavours for the public good since that time. This we may alter. The principle of policy we cannot, as long as the division of power and property in Europe continues the same. We are an island indeed: but if a superior power gives the law to the continent, I apprehend that it will give it to us too in some great degree. Our forefathers apprehended, with reason, the exorbitant power of the house of Austria; and thought that the pretensions of MARY queen of Scots might give, even when she was a prisoner, opportunity and advantage, as they did no doubt, to this power to disturb our peace, and even to invade our island. The exorbitant power of the two branches of the house of Bourbon give surely in this respect, as well as in others, at least the same cause of apprehension now. It is, therefore, plainly our interest to maintain the rivalry between the families of Austria and of Bourbon; and for that purpose to assist the former on every occasion against the latter, as far as the common cause of Europe, not her private ambition, requires; and as far as our national circumstances may enable us to measure out our assistance in any conjuncture to her.

THESE are the measures and proportions, according to which alone political societies ought to unite in alliances, and to assist one another. There is a political, as well as a natural, self-love; and the former ought to be, to every member of a commonwealth, the same determining principle of action, where public interest is concerned, that the latter will be to him most certainly wherever his private interest is concerned. I have heard it often said of one man, that he was a friend or an enemy to the house of Austria; and of another, that he was a friend or an enemy to the house of Bourbon. But these expressions proceed

ceed generally from passion and prepossession, as the sentiments they impute must proceed, whenever they are real, from these causes, or from one which is still worse, from corruption. A wise prince, and a wise people, bear no regard to other states, except that which arises from the coincidence or repugnancy of their several interests; and this regard must therefore vary, as these interests will do, in the perpetual fluctuation of human affairs. Thus queen ELIZABETH and her people opposed the house of Austria, and supported the house of Bourbon, in the sixteenth century. Thus queen ANNE and her people opposed the house of Bourbon, and supported the house of Austria, in the eighteenth. The first, indeed, was done with wiser council; the last with greater force of arms. By the first, our country was enriched; by the last, it was impoverished——

N. B. These considerations were written thus far in the year seventeen hundred and forty-nine, but were never finished.

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