

REVIEW OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.

A History of the early part of the Reign of James the Second, by the Right Hon. C. J. Fox 4to. Miller, London.

Concluded from Page 212. No. III.

THESE two great men lie near to each other, in the dread equality of dust to dust, nor would we wish to speak ill of the dead, but for the advantage of the living. It is, however, to be observed, that public men are public property, and the consequences of their conduct in the history of human affairs, being universally felt, must be submitted to the tribunal of public opinion, of which a free press is the great organ. There is not (we glory in saying so) there is not an individual, however inconsiderable, who does not contribute his voice and vote to the formation of that public opinion; and who has not his share in the verdict to be passed on the highest and haughtiest of men. Unless the grand inquest of public opinion give a verdict in their favour; unless they pass the audit of this, and succeeding ages, what are the monuments of their ambition; what are the pyramids raised on the groaning earth amidst the sweat, and tears, and blood of millions? Sepulchres *without a name*.

Let us therefore, incidentally, remark the great, and, in our mind, the characteristic distinction between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox. The actuating motive (and at best but a selfish one) in the former of these men was ambition of high political station. Whether the station were ostensible or real, his ambition was to be, and to be always Prime Minister of Britain. Most men have a secret idol, and this one was his; he clung most tenaciously to public station. This tenaciousness of power is the most striking feature of his political character, and although he once (and but for once) made use of an expression, that, for a more equal representation of the people in parliament, he would use all his efforts, both as *man* and as *minister*; the truth is, that during the whole course of his political existence, except on one occurrence, shortly succeeded by relapse into office, the *man* was totally sunk and obliterated in the *minister*. He ap-

pears to have perfectly appeased any conscientious scruples, by pushing, on particular occasions, his more early principles to a *certain length*, in council and cabinet, where, on finding the *expected resistance*, he never felt it a very difficult task to submit to those existing circumstances, that directed him to yield up the point, but to continue the Premier. Never did man carry his head so high and haughtily in converse with the world, that could bend his opinions, in certain places, with more convenient pliability and more ignoble stooping. He bowed his head early on the question of reform. He bowed the same haughty head on the question of a war with France; and again did he bow it on the question of Catholic Emancipation. "*Omnia serviliter pro dominatione.*" His friends, associates, and successors are notoriously distinguished by the same tenaciousness of office, which characterized their great patron.

In Mr. Fox, a sense of duty to the public was the guiding principle, and this was grounded on the conviction that, under the same existing circumstances, which exalted and humiliated his antagonist; under the system of a double cabinet, a secret influence and an ostensible minister, it was impossible to serve the Public, or the Sovereign himself so well, as by being the leader of a Whig opposition in parliament. It is best known to those who have had most, and longest experience in the practice of the British Government, how much depends upon the *personality* of the Sovereign. Mr. Fox was occasionally *driven* into office, with little prospect he himself cherished of essentially serving the public, but chiefly from the importunity of his own party, most of which thought themselves too long secluded from the sweets of office, and many of whom had, from time to time, abandoned their leader, under the various pretexts which the ever ready excuse of "existing circumstances" had afforded them. Mr. Fox was never so ill at ease, so much, as we may say, out of himself, as when he happened to be

Minister. In him, the Man was often seen struggling with the Minister, and at such times, even a reply from Mr. Canning disconcerted him. But as for Mr. Pitt, after the manner he had disappointed the hopes, and expectations of the people, he was sensible that unless he *continued Minister* (though employed, rather than trusted) he became *nothing*; not even of so much consideration as the once-famed William Pultney, who buried his name in the earldom of Bath. "O my Country!" were, notwithstanding, the last words that came from the lips of William Pitt, and Charles Fox expired after saying, "I die happy, but I pity you."

The last words of great men are often indicative of character, and, by this sepulchral lamp, we shall sit a little longer, to contemplate them. The expression of Fox is plain, and pathetic; easy to be understood, instantly felt, more endearing than sublime, domestic than political. In the exclamation of Pitt, there is considerable ambiguity, and not a little of that false sublime that hung around his character. It sounds well, but we do not perfectly understand it. It is the echo of something grand, but we do not feel it. What *does* it mean? Was it suggested by the melancholy contrast of the state in which he had found his country, to the condition in which he was about to leave it? Too humiliating a consideration this, for his haughty spirit, though hovering over the grave. Was it then from the fate which his country must encounter, when *he ceased to be* the director of her councils? Presumptuous man! Was it from his prospect of an interminable war, or of an impending peace, a war to be carried on by such men as Canning or Castlereagh, or a peace to be completed by his political rivals? This last exclamation vibrates on the ear, without addressing the understanding, or affecting the heart.

Mr. Fox died, for his own fame, most opportunely. Were peace to have been made, it would have been a peace of *his* making. As the war has continued, he is fortunately withdrawn from disgraces that have accompanied it. He would have been compelled to assume the line of conduct which Pitt

pursued, and his exit would have been equally unfortunate. He expired while the domestic Charities watched round his bed, and the angel of peace whispered the sweet hope of happiness and repose to mankind, as the reward of his public labours. He expired, not with the flourish of a rhetorician, but in the unity, and sincerity of his amiable character, striving, at the last moment, to collect his mind, and condense its then enfeebled, and fluctuating light, on the dearest object of domestic affection. And he bequeathed to his friends, to the public, and to posterity, the work before us, as the memorial of his principles, and a monument of his mind.

In thus contemplating the author, we really *review* his work. As men cannot well be separated from their measures, nor the individual from his principle of action, so the consistence and integrity of the writer, gives an added value, and an increased merit to his performance. Nor will Whig principles be impressed in the minds and memories of men, more forcibly by the practice and the pen of our author, than by the contrast and apostacy of his rival.

It has been said that some time before, and since the death of Mr. Fox, there has been no such thing as a Whig Party; even though it be granted that the party is dissolved, the principles are indissoluble, and as long as the British Constitution exists, there will be, either in parliament, or among the people, a constant wrestle between that political faith and practice which supports, simply and singly the prerogative of the crown, and that which contends for a free parliament and a limited executive. Whatever *name* may be given them, these parties will always exist in or out of Parliament, and however the circumstances of the times, or the uniform tenor of particular reigns, may operate in repressing *combined* exertion, the active and imperishable principle will be cherished in the breasts of millions, who will worship in secret, on these domestic altars, the Genius of the Constitution, and the Lares of Liberty. Whoever reflects upon the cheering moral which is to be deduced from this portion of

British History, will, into whatever sort of days he may be fallen, "abate not one jot of heart or hope, but steer right onward," confident in the recuperative virtue, or what may be called, the *vis medicatrix* of the Constitution.

In the political, as in the material world, observation teaches what experience confirms, that destruction and death are terms only relative to our circumscribed conceptions, and that nature is never more fruitful than when we suppose her at the moment of extinction. The war, which has extended a degree of military discipline over *all* ranks and conditions of people, and which, at the same time, has turned the public attention from political concerns, solely to courts of inquiry and military conventions, will not and cannot be perpetual. War can never be a state of nature in any civilized country. In the exertions of a nation, as in the muscles of an individual, effort long continued, must alternate with rest. It is certainly true, without making any particular application, that there must be a limit to the pressure of taxation and the burthens of a people; nor need we be informed by Herodotus that the camel will kneel to be loaded; but not a moment longer, after finding the burthen more than equal, to his strength. The continuance of the present war depends on a precariousness equal to that of the life of an individual, and such is the strange mutability of European affairs, that it would be to us only the wonder of a week, though certainly the blessing of a life-time, to hear of a discovery being made, and acted on, of the possibility and practicability of England and France being well qualified by nature and the God of nature, to be most useful friends of each other; and that they had so long and with such expense of blood and treasure, cultivated an inveterate, and, as it is invidiously called, a *natural* enmity against each other, merely on a misunderstanding, a vain fear, an unfounded jealousy, and a thorough misconception of the true means of making both nations more wealthy, more prosperous, and more happy.

It would be perhaps easy at any

time to convince the million of a perverted policy in warlike governments, but at no time would it be so, to convince the ministry; yet sooner or later, ministry must accede to the wants and wishes of the million.

The *people* of England are not a hostile people; and by some mutual *sacrifices* of the one power on the land, and of the other on the ocean, a balance might still be preserved to guarantee the liberty of Europe; the dread of universal monarchy might be dispelled; and nations left to reap the rewards exactly commensurate to their extent of capital, their habits of industry, and their geographical station. What would Britain have *then* to fear? With her division of labour in all arts and manufactures, with her extended and extending machinery, with full employment to all classes of the community, with full scope for the diversity of talents and dispositions which discriminate men from each other; with a certain and steady demand for the surplus produce of her soil; with industry, ingenuity and liberty to make her market throughout the world, unrestricted by corporation and monopoly; with that world brought by her shipping to her very doors; with a navy to *defend* her island, and a people rich in the blessings of life, and therefore willing, and therefore able to *defend* themselves, what would Great Britain have, *then*, to fear? In peace, she will conquer France; in war...never. In peace, she will rule the world by its wants, and her power of supplying them. In war, she will have that world her enemy, not merely in military hostility, but the hostility of non-consumption, the necessity (perhaps happy necessity) of every country turning its attention upon *itself*, and bringing its hidden capacities into action. In peace, we need not fear any rivalry. In war we are rearing up future rivals; and, invincible as the navy of Britain is, she may thus be conquered, even upon the ocean. Its waves may be ploughed, but will *they* produce a harvest? If the highway be deserted, what will become of the *market*?

No longer need we fear a single broadside from our enemy's men of war. Nelson's occupation is over;

for Napoleon, or Bonaparte, or whatever name or title, my Lord Castlereagh may chuse to honour him with; this ruler of France, and regent of Europe (whose powers of combination, alas, for liberty! appear to circumscribe and circumvent those of all other men) has constructed a navy of a novel kind, and more efficient service. Here the Baltic, and the German ports, there Holland discharges *prohibitory decrees*, and forms an iron bound coast against the force, or friendship of Britain; and across the Atlantic, we hear, from time to time, a peal of thunder from the circular battery of the American Embargo. This is the warfare, this the navy, by which he means to wrest the trident from the acknowledged Lord of the ocean or make it a *barren sceptre*. We can fight, now, *only* on the continent, and in doing so, we gratify the wishes of Hannibal. He sees Varro descend from his mountains. Let sacrifices be made at the altar of Peace, to meet sacrifices that have been offered at the same altar; even though Mr. Canning, and my Lord Castlereagh be the sacrifices first made, will not the peace of the world be an adequate compensation? There is much patriotism now displayed, but it is at a great distance...from home. We ought not to be patriots, only in *Spain*. But adhering to the party and principles of Fox, not merely with his portrait on our walls, but with his life in our memories, and his book in our hands and hearts, we ought not to hesitate in making sacrifices equal, at least, to those of the enemy, in the pursuit of an honourable peace, and at the same time take every precaution to consolidate these countries against the common enemy, by a reform of existing abuses, by purifying the representation of the people, and by holding forth the right hand of fellowship and welcome, to Catholics into parliament, with the spirit of that generous, and forecasting policy which considers all partial repeal of the Penal laws, as but a tantalizing toleration, and a mitigated persecution.

There is a tide in the opinions as well as in the affairs of men. History

in general, more particularly British History, and, most remarkably, that portion of it selected by our author, is made up of striking manifestations of such periodical flux and reflux in public opinion. As the priests of Egypt, recorded on the Nilometer, the different heights of their beneficent river, which periodically left behind it, verdure, fertility, and an expanse of beauty, so, the muse of History inscribes on a column more lasting than granite, the blessed ERAS of British story, and marks those periodical elevations of national character, to which the country owed successive freedom, and happiness, and glory. At the lowest ebb of the public mind, we feel certain presages of a returning flow of the genuine British character. The period of natural fluctuation, has been disturbed, and driven back, by a mighty revolutionary storm, and the swell that succeeded it; but this conflict of the lower elements, will pass away; and a spring-tide of British and Irish freedom will be regulated as by a power from above. The means for producing such events are often strange and unexpected. It would, indeed, be strange if Spain excited a spirit of liberty in Britain, and if the country of Philip and Alva, instructed that of Alfred and Elizabeth. But, however, or whenever the auspicious era will arrive, which renovates the constitution, by making its House of Commons a pure and impartial representative of all the people, no more sincere gratulation will be given from any part of the empire, than from the NORTH OF IRELAND, a portion of the public mind, which we have good authority to say, was always contemplated by Mr. Fox, with the warmest sympathy, and the most heart-felt respect. X.

Sketch of the Geography and of the History of Spain, with a succinct Account of the Causes of the late Revolution; translated from the French (late Paris edition) with some Remarks of the Translator; by Dennis Taaffe. Dublin; printed by Isaac Colles, published by M'Donald, 1808. p.p. 91. 3s. 4d. sewed.

WE promised ourselves but little entertainment or information