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HENRY ST. JOHN,
LORD VISCOUNT
BOLINGBROKE.

By DR. GOLDSMITH.

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DISSERTATION

UPON

PARTIES:

IN SEVERAL LETTERS TO

CALEB D'ANVERS, ESQ.

WRITTEN BY THE

Right Honourable HENRY ST. JOHN,
late Lord Viscount BOLINGBROKE.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

By DR. GOLDSMITH.

THE ELEVENTH EDITION.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

MDCCLXXXVI.

TO the RIGHT HONOURABLE

Sir ROBERT WALPOLE,

KNIGHT of the most noble order of the Garter,
chancellor and under-treasurer of the exchequer,
first commissioner of the treasury, and
one of his Majesty's most honourable privy-council, &c.

S I R,

AS soon as the demand of the public made it necessary to collect the following papers together, and to prepare a second edition of them, I took the resolution of addressing them to you. The style of my dedication will be very different from that, which is commonly employ'd to persons in your station. But if you find nothing agreeable in the style, you may find perhaps something useful, something
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that will deserve your serious reflection, in the matter of it. I shall compare you neither to BURLEIGH, nor GODOLPHIN. Let me not profane the tombs of the dead to raise altars to the living. I shall make you no compliments on the wisdom of your administration, nor on the wonders you have perform'd, to the honour and advantage of this kingdom, in the course of fourteen, or fifteen years, either at home, or abroad. I shall leave these copious themes to others, and shall confine myself to reasons of another kind, that induced me to this dedication. If these reasons prove sufficient to convince the public of the extreme propriety of it, I have all that I propose to myself. Give me leave to present to you, in one short view, the general design of these little essays.

THEY are design'd then to expose the artifice, and to point out the series of misfortunes, by which we were divided formerly into parties, whose contests brought even the fundamental principles

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principles of our constitution into question, and whose excesses brought liberty to the very brink of ruin.

THEY are design'd to give true ideas of this constitution, and to revive in the minds of men the true spirit of it.

THEY are design'd to assert and vindicate the justice and honour of the revolution ; of the principles establish'd, of the means employ'd, and of the ends obtain'd by it.

THEY are design'd to explode our former distinctions, and to unite men of all denominations in the support of these principles, in the defence of these means, and in the pursuit of these ends.

THEY are design'd to shew how far these ends were answered at the revolution, or have been answered since ; and by consequence how much, or how little is wanting, to render that glorious work complete, according to the original plan, and agreeably to the engagements taken, at that time, with the nation.

LET me now appeal to you, Sir. Are these designs, which any man, who is born a Briton, in any circumstances, in any situation, ought to be ashamed, or afraid to avow? You cannot think it. You will not say it. That never can be the case, until we cease to think, like freemen as well as to be free. Are these designs in favour of the pretender? I appeal to the whole world; and I scorn, with a just indignation, to give any other answer to so shameless, and so senseless an objection. No; they are designs in favour of the constitution; designs to secure, to fortify, to perpetuate that excellent system of government. I court no other cause; I claim no other merit.

“ Stet fortuna domûs, et avi num-
“ merentur avorum.”

LET the illustrious and royal house, that hath been call'd to the government of these kingdoms, govern them
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till time shall be no more. But let the spirit, as well as the letter of the constitution, they are intrusted to preserve, be, as it ought to be, and as we promise ourselves it will be the sole rule of their government, and the sole support of their power; and whatever happens in the course of human contingencies, whatever be the fate of particular persons, of houses, or families, let the liberties of Great Britain be immortal.

THEY will be so, if that constitution, whose genuine effects they be, be maintain'd in purity and vigour. A perpetual attention to this great point is therefore the interest and duty of every man in Britain; and there is scarce any man who may not contribute to the advancement of it, in some degree. The old may inform the young, and the young may animate the old. Even they who are most retired from the scene of business, may be useful, in this cause, to those, who are in it; to those, who are

heated by the action, distracted by the cares, or dissipated by the pleasures of the world. I say, they may be useful; and I add, that they ought to be so to the utmost, that their situation allows. Government is the business of those, who are appointed to controul them. But the British constitution is the business of every Briton. It is so more particularly, indeed, of persons raised, like you, to the highest posts in the government. You lie under particular obligations of this kind, besides the general engagements of interest and duty, that are common to all; and a neglect in others would be a breach of trust in you. We say that our kings can do no wrong. The maxim is wisely establish'd, and ought to be follow'd, no doubt, as far as the conduct of princes renders the observance of it practicable. But from the establishment of this maxim results the necessity of another, without which the exercise of the executive power would remain

remain under no controul. Though our kings can do no wrong, and though they cannot be called to account by any form our constitution prescribes, their ministers may. They are answerable for the administration of the government; each for his particular part, and the prime, or sole minister, when there happens to be one, for the whole. He is so the more, and the more justly, if he hath affected to render himself so, by usurping on his fellows; by wriggling, intriguing, whispering, and bargaining himself into this dangerous post, to which he was not call'd by the general suffrage, nor perhaps by the deliberate choice of his master himself. It follows then that ministers are answerable for everything done to the prejudice of the constitution, in the same proportion as the preservation of the constitution in its purity and vigour or the perverting and weakening it, are of greater consequence to the nation than any other instances of good, or bad government.

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BELIEVE me, Sir, a reverence for the constitution, and a conscientious regard to the preservation of it, are in the political, like charity in the religious system, a cloke to hide a multitude of sins; and as the performance of all other religious duties will not avail in the sight of God, without charity, so neither will the discharge of all other ministerial duties avail in the sight of men, without a faithful discharge of this principal duty. Should a minister govern, in various instances of domestic and foreign management, ignorantly, weakly, or even wickedly; and yet pay this reverence, and bear this regard to the constitution, he would deserve certainly much better quarter, and would meet with it too from every man of sense and honour, than a minister, who should conduct the administration with great ability and success, and should at the same time procure and abet, or even connive at such indirect violations of the rules of the constitution as tend to the destruction

struction of it; or even at such evasions as tend to render it useless. A minister, who had the ill qualities of both these, and the good ones of neither; who made his administration hateful in some respects, and despicable in others; who sought that security by ruining the constitution which he had forfeited by dishonouring the government; who encouraging the profligate, and seduced the unwary, to concur with him in this design, by affecting to explode all public spirit, and to ridicule every form of our constitution; such a minister would be look'd upon most justly as the shame and scourge of this country; sooner or later he would fall without pity; and it is hard to say what punishment would be proportionable to his crimes. To conclude this head therefore; since the obligation of interest and duty on every man, especially on every minister, and more especially still on a prime, or sole minister, to reverence the constitution, to conform

conform his conduct to it, and neither to invade, nor suffer it to be invaded by others, are so undeniable, and so strong; and since the means, which the minister's power gives him to preserve it in purity and vigour, or to corrupt and weaken it, are so many; nothing could be more proper than a dedication to one, in your exalted station of papers, that are written to explain this interest, and to enforce this duty, and to press them on the understanding and conscience of every man in Britain; but of him most, who is most concern'd.

AFTER the general reasons, that have been given, and suggested, for addressing this dedication to you, give me leave to descend into some, that are a little more particular, and that regard the man, as well as the minister.

IF the principles of the revolution, and the means employ'd in it, have not been vindicated by me, with as great force of reason and eloquence, as they were by you, in a famous oration you made at SACHEVEREL's trial, they have

have been vindicated however to the best of my power. The cause is the same, though the performances are not equal ; and since the cause is the same, the cause will recommend my writings to your good opinion, how little forever you may like the advocate. But I have something more to add in my own favour. You had a sermon to condemn, and a parson to roast ; (for that, I think, was the decent language of the time) and, to carry on the allegory, you roasted him at so fierce a fire that you burnt yourselves. Your arguments being confined to the propositions this preacher hath advanced, you may seem rather to have justify'd resistance, or the means employed to bring about the revolution, than the revolution ; for though the principles of the revolution were, and must for ever remain true, and though the means were just, and will for ever be so, in cases of the like nature ; yet true principles, and just means, require to be farther sanctify'd by their ends.

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The man, who should affect the greatest zeal for the principles then establish'd, and the means then used, would deserve, I think, to be rank'd among the false brethren, and would prove himself a treacherous, and a mercenary friend to the revolution if he shew'd any indifference about the ends obtain'd, or endeavour'd in any manner to defeat those, that were intended to be obtain'd by it. The people, who run so great a risque, and bring about so great an event, in order to restore their constitution, and to secure their liberties against dangers of every kind, and especially against those, which recent experience hath taught them to apprehend, have surely a good right to the whole benefit of such a revolution; and they cannot be deprived of any part of this benefit, or left exposed to any shadow of the same dangers, by any rule of justice, or good policy.

SUCH considerations as these made me think that, to assert and vindicate
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fully the honour and justice of the revolution, it was necessary that the ends of the revolution should be insisted upon in my arguments, whether they were so or not in yours; and that the importance of the subject, as well as the difference of the occasions, (for the whole lay open before me) would be sufficient reason for supplying in the copy what was wanting in the original. I have endeavour'd therefore to shew how much our constitution hath been improved, how far our liberties have been better secured by the revolution, and how little is wanting to compleat that glorious design, and to render the British constitution the most perfect system of a free government, that ever was establish'd in the world. If all the ends of the revolution are already obtain'd, it is not only impertinent to argue for obtaining any of them, but factious designs might be imputed, and the name of incendiary be apply'd with some colour, perhaps, to any one, who should
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