



Mr. Angerstein.



*Her Serene Highness
the Margravine of Anspach.*

PUBLIC
CHARACTERS
OF
1803-1804.

" ————— I wish no other herald,
" No other speaker of my *living actions*,
" To keep mine honour from corruption,
" But such an honest chronicler." —————

HEN. VIII. Act. 4. Sc. 2.

" ————— Hic nigræ succus loliginis; hæc est
" Ærugo mera; quod vitium procul afore chartis,
" Atque animo prius, ut si quid promittere de me
" Possum aliud vere promitto."

HORACE, Sat. i. 4. 100.

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PREFACE.

WE now present the Public with the sixth volume of a **WORK**, which, if we are to judge from the rapidity of the sale, and the number of editions, has enjoyed an uninterrupted career of popular favour since its first appearance in 1798.

The lives, as usual, are drawn up by different pens, and the Editors have applied on this, as on former occasions, to such persons as appeared most capable of affording them the means of obtaining correct information.

Other collateral sources have also been resorted to, and neither trouble nor expence has been spared to obtain such a continuation of the **PUBLIC CHARACTERS** of the Empire, as is calculated to satisfy curiosity, without gratifying malevolence.

November the 20th, 1803-



ERRATA.

At page 396, line 20, for *Pageli*, read *Fuzeli*; and for *Parner*, read *Porter*.

At page 401, line 1, for *His second wife, a beautiful, &c. &c.* read, *His second wife was the widow of—— Lucas, Esq. His son is married to a beautiful and amiable young lady, the daughter of William Lock, Esq.*

At page 402, line 5, for *George*, read *David*.

CONTENTS.

	Page
1. SIR ROBERT PEEL.....	1
2. ADMIRAL CORNWALLIS.....	43
3. DEAN OF PETERBOROUGH.....	91
4. GENERAL MEDOWS.....	99
5. MR. ALMON.....	120
6. GENERAL SIMCOE.....	138
7. LORD ELLENBOROUGH.....	152
8. MARQUIS OF BUCKINGHAM.....	168
9. EARL TEMPLE.....	189
10. RIGHT HON. THOMAS GRENVILLE.....	191
11. LORD GRENVILLE.....	193
12. GENERAL FAWCETT.....	202
13. DUKE OF QUEENSBOROUGH.....	207
14. MARGRAVINE OF ANSPACH.....	221
15. GENERAL DUNDAS.....	254
16. MR. RICHARD GOUGH.....	267
17. EARL OF CARLISLE.....	276
18. BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER.....	317
19. LADY HAMILTON.....	325
20. GENERAL PAOLI.....	333
21. MR. BRAHAM.....	373
22. MR. ANGERSTEIN.....	385
23. MR.	

CONTENTS.

	Page
23. MR. PYE.....	404
24. EARL OF WESTMORELAND.....	413
25. MARQUIS OF WELLESLEY.....	422
26. BISHOP OF BANGOR.....	433
27. DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND.....	438
28. GENERAL VALLANCEY.....	446
29. LORD CATHCART.....	483
30. LORD FRANKFORT.....	491
31. GENERAL URQUHART.....	499
32. MAJOR RENNEL.....	505
33. DR. KNOX.....	519
34. BISHOP OF OXFORD.....	530

APPENDIX.

35. MISS SEWARD.....	541
36. BISHOP OF MEATH.....	555



PUBLIC CHARACTERS

1803-1804.

SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART. M. P.

AN author of great celebrity has observed, that if the actions of private life were oftener detailed, they would profit the generality of society more than the splendid exploits of heroes, which they can seldom appreciate, and perhaps never hope to imitate. To bring before the tribunal of the public its benefactors, who have contributed to promote the prosperity of their country, to enlarge the sum of human happiness, in the field, in the senate, or in the sciences, is the delightful province of the biographer. And although it be no less his *duty* to hold up to public abhorrence, as beacons stationed to warn the mariner of danger, those who have raised for themselves monuments of infamy; yet so ungrateful is the task, that rather than fix his eye on the dark shade with the intenseness necessary to the investigation of character, he not unfrequently consigns them, from motives of pure charity, to oblivion.

The attempt to delineate *living characters*, and to

1803—1804.

B

appreciate

appreciate their talents and labours, is attended with fewer difficulties than is usually imagined: for although the passions of hope and fear may sometimes warp the judgment, yet prejudice cannot very much distort, or panegyric embellish the portrait, while the original is every day before the eye of the public, proving the fidelity, or impeaching the integrity of the painter.

If to have contributed materially to the commercial prosperity of his country, as well as to have devoted a considerable part of a very active life to the duties of a senator, be titles to public consideration, the following will be no unworthy accession to the PUBLIC CHARACTERS of this country.

Sir Robert Peel, Baronet, of Drayton Manor, in the county of Stafford, and member of parliament for the borough of Tamworth, is the third son of the late Robert Peel, Esq. of Peelcross, in the county of Lancaster. He was born in the year 1750, and spent the earlier part of his life on this estate, where his father also first beheld the light of heaven, and which has for many generations been in the possession and borne the name of the family.

It has been often remarked, that the infancy of those who have by their subsequent merit risen to high consideration, has generally afforded an intimation of their future eminence. Very early in life, and while fortune appeared to shut the door of advancement against him, Sir Robert Peel entertained strong hopes of being the founder of a family, and at the age of fourteen, to the great entertainment of his brothers, he

he avowed his determination to raise himself to rank and consequence in society; he bottomed these hopes on a conviction that any situation in this free country is accessible to a good capacity, aided by prudence and industry. The distinguished consideration in which he is now held, and the splendid fortune which he enjoys in landed and personal property, afford a striking instance of the effects of persevering industry in a country, where such exertions have the encouragement and support of good laws, impartially administered. A similar presentiment of their future elevation, with prospects not more favourable, is said to have impressed the minds, and to have been avowed by more than one of those prelates who at this time fill the episcopal chair with so much credit to themselves and the church.

It is universally admitted that Sir Robert Peel gave early proofs of uncommon quickness of perception, and betrayed an impatience of being excelled, for when a boy he could little brook a superior. Hence probably arose that spirit in his enterprizes, and that perseverance in habits of industry, in which he seems never to have felt fatigue: and as Genius, when she listens to cautious counsels, never fails of success, so he appears to have steered clear of those reverses which usually accompany even those who prove ultimately fortunate.

The cotton trade was at this period (1770) but a very inconsiderable branch of commerce, although the late ingenious Sir Richard Arkwright had made some happy discoveries in the application of mecha-

nical powers to the abridgment of manual labour. But the blind hostility of the common people to every species of machinery tended to throw considerable difficulties in the way of such improvements, and actually impeded them for a time ; however, the perseverance of the manufacturers finally triumphed over this desolating zeal : a fortunate event for the future employment of thousands, as the success of an enterprise of great national importance depended on those very improvements against which their vengeance was so ignorantly directed.

The father of Sir Robert Peel possessed intellectual faculties in an eminent degree acute. Without the advantages of scholastic knowledge, his shrewdness of observation and accuracy of judgment placed him far above many, who although better educated, yet were not so bountifully endowed by nature. With a numerous progeny of seven sons and a daughter, and strongly impressed with the opinion that happiness as well as prosperity was best promoted by brotherly intercourse, fenced round by family connections, it became his early intention to establish them in a trade so circumstanced, as to afford the best prospect of success to ingenuity, industry and enterprise ; and by pointing out different branches accommodated to the different faculties which early marked their respective characters, he lived to enjoy the enviable happiness of seeing his children prosper in situations agreeable to themselves, and beneficial to their country, in the different branches of the cotton trade ; branches greatly dependent on each other,
and

and much assisted by well founded attachments and mutual confidence. Thus established, and with their separate departments severally assigned to them, they have, without exception, enjoyed a degree of success highly honourable to themselves, and advantageous to the community.

The comparatively rude state of this infant trade at that time, furnished a wide field for the display of the inventive faculties and persevering industry of Sir Robert Peel. He devoted himself very early to explore the powers of mechanical combinations, particularly where they could be converted to the use of his leading pursuit. Genius, naturally ardent, and frequently desultory, often loses by its volatility the reward of its merit, and too often sacrifices the attainment of the end proposed, by an impatience of restraint and an impetuosity of pursuit. It is only when controled by prudence, yet stimulated by laudable ambition, that the acmé of its attainments baffles all calculation.

Sir Robert Peel soon became sensible of the improvements of which machinery was susceptible, as applied to the purposes of commerce; and the success which has rewarded his labours, proves the correctness of this opinion, and is an encouraging instance of the potency of talents when united with prudence and industry.

It is the general complaint of commercial men that a liberal education renders the drudgery of trade irksome to youthful minds; that literary pursuits destroy all taste for pursuits of profit; and that to explore the

intellectual mines of Greece and Rome gives disrelish to the attainment of wealth, through the medium of industry. Whether the father of Sir Robert Peel was influenced or not by these impressions is immaterial: certain it is, that he early initiated his sons in habits of industry. Under the roof of this parent, not otherwise distinguished than by his assiduity and talents, with pre-eminence rendered amiable by conciliatory manners, and disdaining the indulgence of indolence, *pollens vicibus, ingenio validus, non se luxui neque inertiae corrupendum dedit: et cum omnes gloria anteiret, omnibus tamen carus esse*, Sir Robert Peel continued to the twenty-third year of his age: at which time, unrivalled in that particular trade, in which his attention had been principally engaged, he was deemed to possess very considerable knowledge of commerce in general, considered in a national point of view, as a pamphlet which he wrote not long afterwards on the national debt proves.

Prosperity owes its success chiefly, perhaps, to a quick discernment of prominent occurrences, which it seems peculiar to talents sometimes to originate, but more frequently dexterously to appropriate to themselves:

“ There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat:
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.”

SHAKESPEARE.

The

The period when a young adventurer, committing himself to his own guidance, first launches on the ocean of hope, is very interesting and important: sensible of the variableness of the winds, and of the treachery of the smooth surface on which he sails, he pushes his vessel from the shore with a trembling hand; but although clouds and storms sometimes obscure the horizon, yet while industry presides at the helm, and discretion is his polar guide, he will rarely fail to perform the voyage of life with tolerable success.

It was at this period, to which the recursive eye which contemplates his life is frequently turned, that Sir Robert Peel, leaving his paternal habitation, first pruned his wings and attempted to fly. In conjunction with William Yates, Esq. a gentleman of the most benevolent and equable manners, he embarked in an extensive cotton-manufactory at Bury, in Lancashire; a partnership which has since continued with a harmony and success, that very rarely falls to the lot of such engagements.

After fourteen years of silent industry, and we may add, of uninterrupted success, an event took place more connected with his future domestic happiness than with his public eminence, and which no doubt contributed in the most endearing manner to cement a connexion, as fortunately commenced as happily continued. On the 8th day of July, 1787, Sir Robert Peel received at the altar the hand of the amiable Miss Yates, the present Lady Peel, the daughter of his partner, then little more than seventeen years of

age; and although his table has been already surrounded with olive branches nearly as numerous as years have since elapsed, so profuse has Nature been of her endowments, that notwithstanding this amiable female has been the mother as well as the nurse of eleven very fine children, she yet appears but the eldest sister of the family.

It has often been a question of surprize, at what time, and by what means, Sir Robert Peel acquired those intellectual attainments, which he has since manifested; and the same answer, and with equal truth, has been given in this as in many other instances, that the powers of genius require not the plodding industry of common capacities. But whatever facility a quick mind, eagerly bent on its favourite object, may give to the acquisition of ideas and to the comprehension of truth; yet application and industry are indispensable to literary acquirements. For, could we distinctly mark the various sources of reading and instruction of a Shakespeare or a Chatterton, we should find that all is not intuition. The contemporaries of his youth are unanimous in their testimony, that he discovered a precocious attachment to books, and an insatiable thirst of knowledge. In his early as well as his more mature years, even when his commercial concerns were most urgent, he rarely omitted to devote some part of every day to reading. As the rude figure yields only to the plastic hand of the patient artist, and the landscape rises into existence by the daily exercise of the pencil,

“Nulla dies sine linea;”