

ROYAL NAVAL BIOGRAPHY.

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE WILLIAM HENRY,
 DUKE OF CLARENCE,

Duke of St. Andrews in Great Britain, and Earl of Munster in Ireland. Senior Admiral of His Majesty's Fleet; a Privy Counsellor; Ranger of Bushy Park; Knight Grand Cross of the most honourable military Order of the Bath; Knight of the most noble Order of the Garter, and of the most ancient and most noble Order of the Thistle; Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Hanoverian Guelphic Order; Knight of the Prussian Order of the Black Eagle, and of the French Order of the Holy Ghost; Doctor of the Civil Law; and Fellow of the Society of Arts.*

THE antiquity, dignity, and importance of the illustrious house of BRUNSWICK, have occasioned such extraordinary care to transmit their annals to posterity, and have employed the pens of so many ingenious writers, in the various languages and different parts of Europe, that we are thereby enabled to trace it up to a very early period with the greatest certainty. And farther to honour this subject, it has been illustrated by the elaborate investigations of the historian Gibbon; who, in

* The Duke is Patron of the Adult Institution and Asylum, established in memory of the late Princess Charlotte, for friendless unprovided daughters of Clergymen and Naval and Military Officers, of any age from 14 to 22:—an asylum, where the grown-up orphan, in the hour of distress and affliction, may find a temporary refuge, at a period when female inexperience stands most in need of protection. H. R. H. is also a Vice-Patron of the Seaman's Hospital Society, established March 8, 1821; and a Vice-President of the London Hospital.

a posthumous publication, entitled "The Antiquities of the House of Brunswick," which he unfortunately left unfinished, has, on the foundation of the profound researches of Leibnitz and Muratori, furnished the English language with information so satisfactory, as to supersede all that went before it.

"An English subject," says Gibbon, "may be prompted by a just and liberal curiosity, to investigate the origin and story of the house of Brunswick, which, after an alliance with the daughters of our kings, has been called by the voice of a free people, to the legal inheritance of the crown. From George the First, and his father, the first Elector of Hanover, we ascend in a clear and regular series, to the first Duke of Brunswick and Lunenburgh, who received his investiture from Frederick the Second, about the middle of the thirteenth century. If these ample possessions had been the gift of the Emperor to some adventurous soldier, to some faithful client, we might be content with the antiquity and lustre of a noble race, which had been enrolled nearly 600 years among the princes of Germany. But our ideas are raised, and our prospect is opened by the discovery, that the first Duke of Brunswick was rather degraded than adorned by his new title, since it imposed the duties of feudal service on the free and patrimonial estate, which alone had been saved in the shipwreck of the more splendid fortunes of his house. His ancestors had been invested with the powerful duchies of Bavaria and Saxony, which extended far beyond their limits in modern geography: from the Baltic Sea to the confines of Rome they were obeyed, or respected, or feared; and in the quarrels of the Guelphs and Gibellines, the former appellation was derived from the name of their progenitors, in the female line. But the genuine masculine descent of the princes of Brunswick must be explored beyond the Alps; the venerable tree, which has since overshadowed Germany and Britain, was planted in the Italian soil. As far as our sight can reach, we discern the first founders of the race in the Marquises of Este, of Liguria, and perhaps of Tuscany. In the eleventh century, the primitive stem was divided into two branches; the elder migrated to the banks of the Danube and the Elbe; the younger more humbly adhered to the neighbourhood of the Adriatic: the Dukes of Brunswick, and the Kings of Great Britain, are the descend-

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ants of the first ; the Dukes of Ferrara and Modena were the offspring of the second*.”

The august subject of this memoir is the third son of his late Majesty George III. by his consort Sophia-Charlotte, Princess of Mecklenburgh Strelitz, and was born Aug. 21, 1765.

Amidst the various means that were employed to call forth the energy and daring spirit of the nation, at that eventful period, when the connection of our American colonies with the mother country was at length destroyed by the assistance and machinations of France, the noble conduct of George III. who entered Prince William Henry as a Midshipman in the royal navy, excited universal admiration, and produced the following encomium from the Spanish Admiral Langara : “ Well does Great Britain merit the Empire of the Sea, when the humblest stations in her navy are supported by Princes of the Blood.”

His Royal Highness made his first *debut* in the naval service on board the Prince George, of 98 guns, under the tutelage of the late Hon. Admiral Digby, June 15, 1779. His private tutor appears to have been Dr. Majendie, the present Bishop of Bangor. The Prince George was attached to the Channel Fleet, under the orders of Sir Charles Hardy, and cruised in the Bay of Biscay until the latter end of the same year, when she accompanied Sir George B. Rodney to the relief of Gibraltar, the garrison of which place had long been subjected to the privations attendant on a close blockade †. That

* Gibbon's Posthumous Works, vol. ii, p. 637.

† The British armament sailed from Spithead Dec. 26, 1779 ; and on the 8th of the following month captured the whole of a Spanish convoy, consisting of one 64-gun ship, (afterwards named the Prince William, in compliment to H. R. H., in whose presence she was taken,) six armed vessels belonging to the Royal Caraccas Company, and fourteen sail of transports from St. Sebastian, bound to Cadiz, laden with naval stores, provisions, &c.

Eight days after this fortunate event, chace was given to a Spanish squadron consisting of eleven line-of-battle ships and two frigates, commanded by Don Juan de Langara. A running fight took place, and was kept up during the whole of the ensuing night, in most tempestuous weather, with a heavy sea ; and at two o'clock on the following morning six of the enemy's ships had surrendered, besides one (the St. Domingo of 70 guns), that blew up at the commencement of the action. The captured ships

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venerable fortress having been put in a state of perfect security, the Commander-in-Chief sent Rear-Admiral Digby to England with part of his fleet, and the prizes taken during the passage, and proceeded with the remainder to the Leeward Islands.

On the 23d Feb. 1780, Prince William Henry was present at the capture of the *Prothée*, a French 64-gun ship, and three vessels, forming part of a convoy bound to the Mauritius, laden with naval and military stores. From this period H. R. H. served with the Channel Fleet until the spring of 1781, when the *Prince George* was attached to the fleet sent under the orders of Vice-Admiral Darby, with supplies for Gibraltar. On this occasion 7000 tons of provisions, and 2000 barrels of gunpowder, were landed in the midst of a tremendous cannonade, the enemy having collected such a formidable flotilla of gun-boats, carrying 24 and 18-pounders, for the purpose of impeding the disembarkation, as to render it necessary for several ships of the line to anchor in the bay, for the protection of the transports.

We next find H. R. H. proceeding with Rear-Admiral Digby to the coast of North America, where, preferring a cruising vessel to the inactivity of a stationary ship, the *Prince George* remaining principally at New York, he was removed at his

were the *Phoenix* of 80 guns, bearing the Admiral's flag; and the *Minorca*, *Princessa*, *Diligente*, *San Julian*, and *San Eugenio*, of 70 guns each. By this time the British fleet, which consisted of three 3-deckers, eleven ships of 74 guns, one of 64, and two frigates, were very near the Spanish coast, which, with the wind as it then blew, was a lee shore. Every exertion was made to put the prizes in a proper state to proceed; but the two last that submitted were so much disabled, and had approached so near the harbour of Cadiz, that it became dangerous, with such rough weather, to attempt taking them in tow: the *San Eugenio* was therefore abandoned, and soon struck on some rocks, whence she was afterwards hove off by the Spaniards. The *San Julian* drifting without any mast, excepting the stump of her fore-mast, very near the land, the British officers in possession were obliged to run her a-shore, near to Port St. Mary, where she was entirely lost: providentially, however, all on board escaped. This second disaster which the Spaniards experienced, rendered abortive a projected expedition in concert with the French, against our West India settlements. The total number of killed and wounded on board the British fleet, amounted to 134, including Lieutenants Forbes and Forrest of the navy, and Strachan of the marines.

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own request into the Warwick, of 50 guns, commanded by the present Viscount Keith, and was with that officer when he captured l'Aigle, a large French frigate, la Sophie, of 22 guns, and the Terrier sloop of war, off the Delaware river, Sept. 11, 1782.

Prince William Henry continued to serve in the Warwick until the 3d Nov. following, when, in compliance with the command of his august parent, he joined the late Viscount Hood, who had come from the West Indies in quest of a French squadron under the command of the Marquis de Vaudreuil. It was at this time that our illustrious sailor became acquainted with the heroic Nelson, to whom he was first introduced by Lord Hood, on board the Barfleure.

The enemy being securely anchored in the port of Boston, the British Admiral sailed from Sandy Hook on his return to the West Indies, Nov. 22d. ; and, after cruising for some time off Cape François, anchored at Port Royal on the 5th Feb. 1783. During H. R. H.'s stay at Jamaica, he was treated with distinguished marks of attention by all ranks of people, and was attended by a corps of cavalry, (to which was given the name of Prince William Henry's regiment,) raised for the express purpose, by the merchants, planters, and other inhabitants.

Subsequent to the termination of hostilities, H. R. H. visited Cape François and the Havannah, at which places he was welcomed by the French and Spanish authorities with every honour due to his exalted rank. His presence at the former had, moreover, the happy effect of preserving the lives of several British subjects, as will be seen by the following handsome communication from the Governor of Louisiana :

“ Cape François, April 6, 1783.

“ Sir.—The Spanish troops cantoned throughout the country, have not, as the French, had the happiness to take up their arms to salute your Royal Highness, nor that of paying you those marks of respect and consideration which are your due : it is what they will ever regret.

“ I have in confinement at Louisiana, the principal person concerned in the revolt at Natchez, with some of his accomplices. They have forfeited their parole and oath of fidelity. A council of war founded on equitable laws, has condemned

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them to death, and the execution of their sentence waits only my confirmation, as governor of the colony. They are all English. Will you be pleased, Sir, to accept their pardon and their lives, in the name of the Spanish army, and of my King? It is I trust the greatest present that can be offered to one Prince in the name of another. Mine is generous, and will approve my conduct.

“In case your Royal Highness deigns to interest yourself for those unfortunate men, I have the honour to send enclosed an order for their being delivered the moment any vessel arrives at Louisiana communicating your pleasure. We shall consider ourselves happy if this can be agreeable to you. I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) “B. D. GALVEZ.”

To this letter H. R. H. sent the following answer by Captain (now Sir Manley) Dixon, in the Tobago sloop of war.

“*Port Royal, Jamaica, April 13th, 1783.*

“Sir.—I want words to express to your Excellency my just sense of your polite letter, of the delicate manner in which you caused it to be delivered, and your generous conduct towards the unfortunate. Their pardon, which you have been pleased to grant on my account, is the most agreeable present you could have offered me, and is strongly characteristic of the bravery and gallantry of the Spanish nation. This instance increases, if possible, my opinion of your Excellency’s humanity, which has appeared on so many occasions in the course of the late war.

“Admiral Rowley is to despatch a vessel to Louisiana for the prisoners; I am convinced they will ever think of your Excellency’s clemency with gratitude; and I have sent a copy of your letter to the King my father, who will be fully sensible of your Excellency’s attention to me.

“I request my compliments to Madame Galvez, and that you will be assured, that actions so noble as those of your Excellency will ever be remembered by,

(Signed) “WILLIAM HENRY*.”

On the 12th May following, the day on which H. R. H.’s

* Admiral Rowley accordingly despatched a sloop of war to Louisiana, and the prisoners were brought up to Jamaica.

visit to the Havannah terminated, Lord Hood proceeded with his squadron on his return to England, where he arrived, accompanied by the Prince, towards the latter end of June.

In the summer of 1785, Prince William Henry, having served the regular time in the navy as a Midshipman, all the duties of which station he performed with becoming alacrity, and having undergone the usual examination, was appointed third Lieutenant of the *Hebe* frigate, commanded by Captain (now Sir Edward) Thornbrough: soon after the Hon. John Leveson Gower hoisted his broad pendant in that ship, and proceeded on a cruise round Great Britain and the Orkney Islands. H. R. H. was presented with an address by the inhabitants of each place at which he touched, and received every possible mark of attention and respect.

The Prince continued in the *Hebe* until Feb. 1786, in the course of which month he was appointed first Lieutenant of the *Pegasus* of 28 guns; and on the 10th of April, in the same year, he received his commission as Captain of that frigate*.

On H. R. H. being appointed to the command of the *Pegasus*, the Port Admiral at Plymouth signified to him, that it was the wish of the Captains then in harbour, to be introduced to him in form: to which the Prince with great readiness assented, and appointed the following day for his levee at the Commissioner's House. The Admiral having introduced the several Captains to H. R. H., he expressed great surprise that his late brother officers, the Lieutenants, did not wait upon him, and signified his pleasure that they should attend his levee the next day. They were accordingly introduced to the Prince, who with a condescension that will ever do him honour, invited himself to dine with them, naming a day previous to that on which he had appointed to dine with the Captains; adding, "And then, my boys, we will have a jolly day together!"

Prince William Henry sailed from Plymouth June 5, 1786, and proceeded to Halifax, in Nova Scotia, where he landed amidst the acclamations of a numerous and loyal people. H. R. H. expressed his desire, that all military form and etiquette with respect to himself should be laid aside: but it

* He passed over the intermediate rank of Commander.

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was found impossible to stifle the joy which broke forth, and pervaded all ranks of people, at seeing the son of their beloved Monarch among them.

In the course of November in the same year, he proceeded to the Leeward Island station, where he continued some months under the orders of the late Lord Nelson, at that time Captain of the *Boreas* frigate, whom he joined, and supported in correcting the abuses in the dock-yard at Antigua, as well as among the contractors, prize-agents, &c. The friendship that had before subsisted between these officers, had been kept up by an occasional correspondence*; and they now contracted that permanent regard for each other, which became so highly honourable and beneficial to both. "It was at this era," says the Prince, "that I particularly observed the greatness of Nelson's superior mind. — The manner in which he enforced the spirit of the Navigation Act, first drew my attention to the commercial interests of my country. We visited the different islands together; and as much as the manœuvres of fleets can be described off the headlands of islands, we fought over again the principal naval actions in the American war. Excepting the naval tuition which I had received on board the *Prince George*, when the present Rear-Admiral Keats † was Lieutenant of her, and for whom both of us equally entertained a sincere regard, my mind took its first decided naval turn from this familiar intercourse with Nelson ‡."

The high opinion which that great man entertained of the Prince, is illustrated by the following extract from a letter to his early friend, Captain Locker. "You must have heard long before this reaches you, that Prince William is under my command. I shall endeavour to take care that he is not a loser by that circumstance. He has his foibles, as well as private men;

* A large portion of Clarke and M'Arthur's splendid *Life of Lord Nelson* is compiled from the correspondence the hero kept up with his Royal Highness.

† The present worthy Governor of Greenwich Hospital.

‡ During the time the Prince remained on the Leeward Island station, H. B. H. and Nelson dined alternately with each other. A piece of the mast of the *Victory*, before which Nelson fell, has been consecrated to his memory by the Duke of Clarence, in a Naval Temple at Bushy Park, which also contains a bust of the noble Admiral.

but they are far overbalanced by his virtues. In his professional line he is superior to near two-thirds, I am sure, of the list; and in attention to orders, and respect to his superior officer, I hardly know his equal: this is what I have found him." In a subsequent letter he says, "H. R. H. keeps up strict discipline in his ship; and without paying him any compliment, she is one of the finest ordered frigates I have seen."

The marriage of Nelson and the accomplished Frances Herbert Nisbet *, took place at Nevis, March 11, 1787. The bride was given away by Prince William Henry; who with many others congratulated their friend in having borne off the principal favourite of the island. In the month of May following H. R. H., having completed the tour of the islands †, sailed from Grenada, and arrived at Jamaica on the 31st. In August he proceeded to Quebec, and thence returned to Plymouth, where he anchored Dec. 27th, after an absence of one year and a half.

On his arrival in England, the Prince was appointed to command the *Andromeda* frigate, in which ship he again visited the West Indies. The *Andromeda* anchored at Port Royal, Nov. 15, 1788, when the whole House of Assembly waited on H. R. H. with their congratulations: and on the 2d of December, they voted a thousand guineas to be laid out in the purchase of an elegant star, ornamented with diamonds, to be presented to him, as an humble testimony of the very high respect and esteem the island entertained for his eminent virtues, and the happiness they felt in seeing him among them; as well as the grateful sense they had of the particular attention paid by H. R. H. to the duties of a profession, which was the support and defence of the British empire in general, and of that island in particular ‡.

On the 19th May 1789, H. R. H. was created Duke of

* Mother of the present Captain Josiah Nisbet, of whom a Memoir will appear in a subsequent part of this work.

† The House of Assembly at Barbadoes passed a vote to present H. R. H. with a gold-hilted sword, valued at three hundred guineas. The Council and Assembly of Dominica presented him with a time piece of equal value.

‡ At a subsequent period the same body voted three thousand guineas, to purchase a piece of plate to be presented to H. R. H., as a testimony of their sense of his great parliamentary services in the important question relative to the African Slave-trade.

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Clarence, and of St. Andrews in the kingdom of Great Britain, and Earl of Munster in Ireland *. In 1790, when the conduct of the Spaniards at Nootka Sound seemed to render a war inevitable, he was nominated to the command of the Valiant, of 74 guns ; and, on the 3d Dec. in the same year, advanced to the rank of Rear-Admiral. By subsequent promotions H. R. H. had become an Admiral of the Red, when, on the demise of Sir Peter Parker, Bart., in Dec. 1811, he succeeded that veteran officer as Admiral of the Fleet.

During the late wars the Royal Duke often solicited employment, but without success. He, however, took an active part in Parliament whenever naval affairs became the subject of discussion, and never omitted any opportunity, afforded him by the successes of his professional brethren, to express his gratitude as a Prince of the Blood for their exertions in support of the throne and constitution of these realms.

In April 1814, the period of Napoleon Buonaparte's abdication, H. R. H. hoisted his flag on board the Jason frigate, being appointed to escort Louis XVIII. to his native country. At one P. M. on Sunday the 24th of that month, his Most Christian Majesty left Dover pier in the Royal Sovereign yacht, under a salute from all the batteries. The Prince Regent of Great Britain placed himself on the farthest part of the pier, and joined in the cheers of an immense concourse of delighted spectators. The scene was grand and impressive. The event itself will form a distinguished feature of our history. On arriving off the French coast, the yacht hove to, when the Jason, followed in succession by the other ships of the squadron, passed her, saluted, manned the yards, gave three cheers, and bore away. The yacht then approached the harbour of Calais, and was received by a tremendous explosion from the different batteries, which continued upwards of two hours. The Duke of Clarence having now performed the high and gratifying office, of conveying a Monarch to the long-

* The first creation of a Duke in England was by a charter, dated March 13, 11 Edward III, in favour of his son Edward, surnamed the Black Prince, wherein he was declared Duke of Cornwall, to hold to himself and his heirs, Kings of England, and to their first-born sons ; by virtue of which charter, the eldest son of the King of England is by law acknowledged Duke of Cornwall the instant he is born.