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Nathaniel William Wraxall

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Memoirs of the Courts of Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw, and Vienna, in the Years 1777–79

Nathaniel Wraxall (1751–1831) worked for the East India Company before becoming an MP in 1780. He travelled extensively in Europe and moved in royal and diplomatic circles, collecting anecdotes which later made their way into several popular travel narratives and memoirs that were to bring him great fame. In this work, published in two volumes in 1799 and using an epistolary form, Wraxall gives his impressions of a number of European courts that he visited in the late 1770s. In Volume 1 the author gives a personal account of the tragic destiny of Queen Caroline Matilda of Denmark (the sister of George III of Great Britain), who was exiled to Celle in Germany after an extra-marital affair with her husband's doctor and counsellor. He also describes Frederick the Great of Prussia and his court, and laments the decline of the once-great city of Cracow.

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VOLUME 1

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MEMOIRS
OF THE
COURTS
OF
*BERLIN, DRESDEN, WARSAW,
AND VIENNA,*
In the Years 1777, 1778, and 1779.

By N. W. WRAXALL, Esq.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON,
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P R E F A C E.



THESE Memoirs were originally collected, with a view to publication; but, a reluctance to disclose anecdotes and facts relative to so many distinguished living characters, induced me to postpone the accomplishment of my intention, to a distant period. The lapse of more than twenty years, has fully emancipated me from those restraints; the decease of the King of Poland, and of the Archduchess Christina, both which took place during the course of last year, having withdrawn the only remaining impediments to their appearance. The deposition, added to the misfortunes

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P R E F A C E.

of Stanislaus, rendered him peculiarly favored; and had he been still alive, I should yet have delayed publishing these Memoirs.

However remote the time may appear since they were written, I have still chosen to be wholly silent on many points, equally curious and interesting. The personages themselves, to whom that remark applies, are either dead, or forgotten; and motives of respect induce me to let them remain in oblivion.

In unveiling the errors, or disclosing the foibles, of Princes and of Ministers, we must consider them as incident to the frailties and infirmities, inseparable from human nature. But, their greatest faults will be obliterated, when compared with the atrocities, and contrasted with the excesses, of the present self-created Sovereigns of France.

How

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How moderate will appear the ambition of Joseph the Second, in the affair of the Bavarian succession; and how mild must be accounted the most despotic acts of Frederic, towards the Saxons, or the Poles; on a comparison with the flagitious enormities now committed, under the banner of Liberty and Equality, in Switzerland, in Rome, and in Piedmont! Even in their most arbitrary proceedings, Joseph and Frederic respected the rights of human nature, of religion, and of nations. In the conduct of the “Directory,” we experience their emancipation from all restraints of private honor, of public faith, and of moral obligation. They have made the best apology for despotism, as well as for superstition; and have compelled us to look back with envy or regret, to ages of the earth, which the philosophy

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of

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P R E F A C E.

of the present time has endeavoured to re-
present, as only deserving of oblivion, or
worthy of compassion.

CHESTERFIELD STREET,
BERKELEY SQUARE,
April 2, 1799.

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