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Edited by William Stanhope Taylor and John Henry Pringle

Excerpt

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CORRESPONDENCE,

&c. &c.

THE EARL OF CHATHAM TO JOHN CALCRAFT, ESQ.

Pall Mall, Thursday, 10 o'clock, p. m.

[November 22, 1770.]

LORD CHATHAM begs to know how Mr. Calcraft does. If this finds him in town and well, it will give great pleasure in Pall Mall, if he will be so good as to call there to-morrow morning about ten. The object is to consult the means of bringing about properly a meeting and conversation upon the present state of things, between Mr. Wedderburne⁽¹⁾ and Lord Chatham, in order to an explicit understanding of intentions, as to future views, which Mr. Wedderburne's past pretensions may naturally give him.

The debate in the Lords⁽²⁾ indifferent enough!
How was it in the House of Commons?

(1) See Vol. III. pp. 357, 475.

(2) A debate on the seizure of Falkland's Island, by order of the King of Spain, had this day taken place in the House of Lords, on a motion of the Duke of Richmond, for copies of the papers received by ministers, between September 1769 and September 1770, touching any hostilities commenced, or de-

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THE EARL OF CHATHAM TO JOHN CALCRAFT, ESQ.

Hayes, Sunday, 3 o'clock.

[November 25, 1770.]

A THOUSAND thanks to you, my dear Sir, for the obliging favour of your letter, with the interesting

signed to be commenced by the Crown of Spain, or any of its officers, against any part of his Majesty's dominions. The noble duke asserted, that the hostile intentions of the Spaniards were not limited to the claim of Falkland's island, as appeared by their preventing the departure of the garrison and ships' crew immediately after the capture of the place; and that three thousand British seamen were then prisoners in ports belonging to Spain, having been taken out of merchant ships by guardacostas, and condemned to perpetual slavery, or confinement. Lord Weymouth and the Earl of Hillsborough contended, that the production of the papers would embarrass a negotiation already in a prosperous train; descanted on the delicacy and punctiliousness of Spanish honour, and insisted that ministers had conducted themselves with prudence, vigour, and vigilance. The following elaborate report of the speech of Lord Chatham upon this occasion is from the pen of Sir Philip Francis, who was present at the debate. In 1813, forty-three years after it was delivered, he revised and corrected it for the Parliamentary History of England.*

The Earl of *Chatham* said:—

"I rise to give my hearty assent to the motion made by the noble duke: by his grace's favour, I have been permitted to see it, before it was offered to the House. I have fully considered the necessity of obtaining from the king's servants a communication of the papers described

* Sir Philip Francis's report of Lord Chatham's speech on the 9th of January will be found in vol. III. p. 368. Another version of this speech is given in the recently published "*Memoirs of the Life and Times of Mr. Grattan*," vol. i. p. 230, stated to have been "*taken at the time*," by that right honourable gentleman himself. In this there must be some blunder; for, on turning to p. 151. of the same volume, we find Mr. Grattan, on that day, instead of being occupied at Westminster in taking Lord Chatham's speech, writing in *Dublin* to his friend Mr. Day, acquainting him, that "he should soon be in London, as he was tired of Dublin, with all its hospitality and all its claret."

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enclosures it contained. Mr. Wedderburne's answer is every thing I could wish ; nothing can be more

in the motion, and I am persuaded that the alarming state of facts, as well as the strength of reasoning, with which the noble duke has urged, and enforced that necessity, must have been powerfully felt by your lordships. What I mean to say, upon this occasion, may seem perhaps to extend beyond the limits of the motion before us ; but I flatter myself, my lords, that if I am honoured with your attention, it will appear that the meaning and object of this question are naturally connected with considerations of the most extensive national importance. For entering into such considerations, no season is improper ; no occasion should be neglected. Something must be done, my lords, and immediately, to save an injured, insulted, undone country. If not to save the state, my lords, at least to mark out, and drag to public justice those servants of the crown, by whose ignorance, neglect, or treachery this once great flourishing people are reduced to a condition as deplorable at home, as it is despicable abroad. Examples are wanted, my lords, and should be given to the world, for the instruction of future times, even though they be useless to ourselves. I do not mean, my lords, nor is it intended by the motion, to impede, or embarrass a negotiation, which we have been told is now in a prosperous train, and promises a happy conclusion." [Lord Weymouth here said—I beg pardon for interrupting the noble lord, but I think it necessary to remark, that I have not said a single word tending to convey to your lordships any information or opinion, with regard to the state, or progress of the negotiation. I did, with the utmost caution, avoid giving the least intimation upon that matter.] — "I perfectly agree with the noble lord. I did not mean to refer to any thing said by his lordship : he expressed himself, as he always does, with moderation and reserve, and with the greatest propriety. It was another noble lord, very high in office, who told us he understood that the negotiation was in a favourable train." [Earl of Hillsborough.—I did not make use of the word train. I know the meaning of the word too well. In the language from which it was derived, it signifies protraction and delay, which I could never mean to apply to the present negotiation.]—"This is the second time that I have been interrupted. I submit it to your lordships, whether this be fair and candid treatment. I am sure it is contrary to the orders of the House, and a gross violation of decency and politeness. I listen to every noble lord in this House with attention and respect. The noble lord's design in interrupting me is as mean and unworthy, as the manner in which he has done it is irregular and disorderly. He flatters himself that, by breaking the thread of my discourse, he shall confuse me in my argument. But, my lords, I will not submit to this treatment. I will not be interrupted. When I have concluded, let him answer me if he can. As to the word

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flattering to me, or mark a better general disposition in him. The rest, further explanation and ex-

which he has denied, I still affirm that it was the word he made use of; but if he had used any other, I am sure every noble lord will agree with me, that his meaning was exactly what I had expressed it. Whether he said course or train is indifferent. He told your lordships, that the negotiation was in a way that promised a happy and honourable conclusion. His distinctions are mean, frivolous, and puerile. My lords, I do not understand the exalted tone assumed by that noble lord. In the distress and weakness of this country, my lords, and conscious as the ministry ought to be how much they have contributed to that distress and weakness, I think a tone of modesty, of submission, of humility, would become them better; *quædam causæ modestiam desiderant*. Before this country they stand as the greatest criminals. Such I shall prove them to be: for I do not doubt of proving to your lordships' satisfaction, that since they have been entrusted with the conduct of the King's affairs, they have done every thing that they ought not to have done, and hardly any thing that they ought to have done.

"The noble lord talks of Spanish punctilios in the lofty style and idiom of a Spaniard. We are to be wonderfully tender of the Spanish point of honour, as if *they* had been the complainants, as if *they* had received the injury. I think he would have done better to have told us, what care had been taken of the English honour. My lords, I am well acquainted with the character of that nation, at least as far as it is represented by their court and ministry, and should think this country dishonoured by a comparison of the English good faith with the punctilios of a Spaniard. My lords, the English are a candid, an ingenuous people; the Spaniards are as mean and crafty, as they are proud and insolent. The integrity of the English merchant, the generous spirit of our naval and military officers, would be degraded by a comparison with *their* merchants or officers. With their ministers I have often been obliged to negotiate, and never met with an instance of candour or dignity in their proceedings; nothing but low cunning, trick, and artifice. After a long experience of their want of candour and good faith, I found myself compelled to talk to them in a peremptory, decisive tone. On this principle, I submitted my advice to a trembling council for an immediate declaration of a war with Spain.* Your lordships

* The following memorandum, in the handwriting of Lord Chatham, and dated September 18, 1761, contains the advice alluded to: — "Mr. Wall has declared, in a paper delivered to the Earl of Bristol on the 28th past, that the memorial which M. de Bussy presented here, by order of his court, concerning the disputes of Spain with Great Britain, was a step taken with the

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change of sentiments will not fail immediately to ascertain. You are, after your usual goodness,

well know what were the consequences of not following that advice. Since, however, for reasons unknown to me, it has been thought advisable to negotiate with the court of Spain, I should have conceived that the great and single object of such a negotiation would have been, to have obtained complete satisfaction for the injury done to the crown and people of England. But, if I understand the noble lord, the only object of the present negotiation is to find a salvo for the punctilious honour of the Spaniards. The absurdity of such an idea is of itself insupportable. But, my lords, I object to our negotiating at all, in our present circumstances. We are not in that situation, in which a great and powerful nation is permitted to negotiate. A foreign power has forcibly robbed his Majesty of a part of his dominions. Is the island restored? Are you replaced in *statu quo*? If that had been done, it might then, perhaps, have been justifiable to treat with the aggressor upon the satisfaction he ought to make for the insult offered to the crown of England. But will you descend so low? will you so shamefully betray the King's honour, as to make it a matter of negotiation whether his Majesty's possessions shall be restored to him or not? I doubt not, my lords, that there are some important mysteries in the conduct of this affair, which, whenever they are explained, will account

full consent, approbation, and pleasure of his Catholic Majesty.' The said French memorial specifies three points of dissention, which subsist between England and Spain: 1st, The restitution of prizes taken on the subjects of Spain, during the present war; 2d, liberty to the Spanish nation of fishing on the bank of Newfoundland; 3d, the destruction of the English establishments formed on the Spanish territory, in the Bay of Honduras; and farther declares, that if the Catholic king should, on account of these disputes, determine on war, his most Christian Majesty is engaged to take part therein. This unjust and unexampled proceeding of the court of Spain, by enforcing her demands on England through the channel and by the compulsion of a hostile power, denouncing eventually future war in conjunction, while Spain was still professing amity and friendship with Great Britain; and the full declaration and avowal, at last made by the Spanish ministry, of a total union of councils and interests between the two monarchies of the House of Bourbon, are matters of so high and urgent a nature, as call indispensably on his Majesty to take forthwith such necessary and timely measures as God has put into his hands, for the defence of the honour of his crown, and of the just and essential interests of his Majesty's people. It is, therefore most humbly submitted to his Majesty's wisdom, that orders be forthwith sent to the Earl of Bristol to deliver a declaration, signed by his Excellency, to the above effect, and to return immediately to England, without taking leave."

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infinitely kind to think of a journey to town ; which seems by no means necessary on this account.

for the profound silence now observed by the King's servants. The time will come, my lords, when they shall be dragged from their concealments. Their are some questions, which, sooner or later, must be answered. The ministry, I find, without declaring themselves explicitly, have taken pains to possess the public with an opinion, that the Spanish court have constantly disavowed the proceedings of their governor ; and some persons, I see, have been shameless and daring enough to advise his Majesty to support and countenance this opinion in his Speech from the throne. Certainly, my lords, there never was a more odious, a more infamous falsehood imposed on a great nation — it degrades the King's honour — it is an insult to Parliament. His Majesty has been advised to confirm and give currency to an *absolute falsehood*. I beg your lordships' attention, and I hope I shall be understood, when I repeat, that the court of Spain's having disavowed the act of their governor is an *absolute, a palpable falsehood*. Let me ask, my lords, when the first communication was made by the court of Madrid, of their being apprised of their taking of Falkland's Islands, was it accompanied with an offer of instant restitution, of immediate satisfaction, and the punishment of the Spanish governor ? If it was not, they have adopted the act as their own, and the very mention of a disavowal is an impudent insult offered to the King's dignity. The King of Spain disowns the thief, while he leaves him unpunished, and profits by the theft : in vulgar English, he is the receiver of stolen goods, and ought to be treated accordingly.

“ If your lordships will look back to a period of the English history, in which the circumstances are reversed, in which the Spaniards were the complainants, you will see how differently *they* succeeded : you will see one of the ablest men, one of the bravest officers this or any other country ever produced (it is hardly necessary to mention the name of sir Walter Raleigh) sacrificed by the meanest prince that ever sat upon the throne, to the vindictive jealousy of that haughty court. James the First was base enough, at the instance of Gondomar, to suffer a sentence against sir Walter Raleigh, for another supposed offence, to be carried into execution almost twelve years after it had been passed. This was the pretence. His real crime was, that he had mortally offended the Spaniards, while he acted by the King's express orders, and under his commission.

“ My lords, the pretended disavowal by the court of Spain is as ridiculous as it is false. If your lordships want any further proof, call for your own officers, who were stationed at Falkland Island. Ask the officer who commanded the garrison, whether, when he was sum-

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If you will be so good as to answer Mr. Wedderburne's letter, as having communicated it to me,

moned to surrender, the demand was made in the name of the governor of Buenos Ayres, or of his Catholic Majesty? Was the island said to belong to Don Francisco Bucarelli*, or to the King of Spain? If I am not mistaken, we have been in possession of these islands since the year 1764, or 1765.† Will the ministry assert, that in all that time, the Spanish court have never once claimed them? that their right to them has never been urged, or mentioned to our ministry? If it has, the act of the governor of Buenos Ayres is plainly the consequence of our refusal to acknowledge and submit to the Spanish claims. For five years they negotiate; when that fails, they take the island by force. If that measure had arisen out of the general instructions, constantly given to the governor of Buenos Ayres, why should the execution of it have been deferred so long?

"My lords, if the falsehood of this pretended disavowal had been confined to the court of Spain, I should have admitted it without concern. I should have been content that they themselves had left a door open for excuse and accommodation. The King of England's honour is not touched till he adopts the falsehood, delivers it to his Parliament, and makes it his own.

"I cannot quit this subject without comparing the conduct of the present ministry with that of a gentleman (Mr. George Grenville,) who is now no more. The occasions were similar. The French had taken a little island from us called Turk's Island. The minister then at the head of the treasury, took the business upon himself; but he did not negotiate: he sent for the French ambassador, and made a peremptory demand. A courier was dispatched to Paris, and returned in a few days, with orders for instant restitution, not only of the island, but of every thing that the English subjects had lost.

"Such then, my lords, are the circumstances of our difference with Spain; and in this situation, we are told that a negotiation has been entered into, that this negotiation, which must have commenced near three months ago, is still depending, and that any insight into the actual state of it will impede the conclusion. My lords I am not, for my own part, very anxious to draw from the ministry the information which they take so much care to conceal from us. I very well know where this honourable negotiation *will* end; where it *must* end. We may, perhaps, be able to patch up an accommodation for the present, but we shall have a Spanish war in six months. Some of your lordships may, perhaps, remember the Convention. For several successive years our merchants had been plundered — no protection given

* The Spanish commander of the expedition.

† See Vol. III. pp. 119, 132.

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and, if you please, to express, in my name, the sense I have of Mr. Wedderburne's most obliging

them — no redress obtained for them; during all that time we were contented to complain, and to negotiate : — the court of Madrid were then as ready to disown their officers, and as unwilling to punish them, as they are at present. Whatever violence happened was always laid to the charge of one or other of their West India governors. To-day it was the governor of Cuba, to-morrow of Porto Rico, Carthage, or Porto Bello. If in a particular instance, redress was promised, how was that promise kept? The merchant, who had been robbed of his property, was sent to the West Indies, to get it, if he could, out of an empty chest. At last the Convention was made; but, though approved by a majority of both Houses, was received by the nation with universal discontent. I myself heard that wise man, Sir Robert Walpole, say in the House of Commons, 'Tis true we have got a Convention and a vote of parliament; but what signifies it, we shall have a Spanish war upon the back of our Convention.' — Here, my lords, I cannot help mentioning a very striking observation made to me by a noble lord, (the late lord Granville) since dead. His abilities did honour to this House and to this nation: in the upper departments of government he had not his equal; and I feel a pride in declaring, that to his patronage, to his friendship and instruction, I owe whatever I am. This great man has often observed to me that, in all the negotiations which preceded the Convention, our ministers never found out that there was no ground, or subject for any negotiation; that the Spaniards had not a right to search our ships, and when they attempted to regulate that right by treaty, they were regulating a thing which did not exist. This I take to be something like the case of the ministry. The Spaniards have seized an island they have no right to, and his Majesty's servants make it matter of negotiation, whether his dominions shall be restored to him or not.

" From what I have said, my lords, I do not doubt but it will be understood by many lords, and given out to the public, that I am for hurrying the nation, at all events, into a war with Spain. My lords, I disclaim such councils, and I beg that this declaration may be remembered — let us have peace, my lords, but let it be honourable, let it be secure. A patched up peace will not do. It will not satisfy the nation, though it may be approved of by parliament. I distinguish widely between a solid peace, and the disgraceful expedients, by which a war may be deferred but cannot be avoided. I am as tender of the effusion of human blood, as the noble lord who dwelt so long upon the miseries of war. If the bloody politics of some noble lords had been followed, England, and every quarter of his Majesty's dominions, would have been glutted with blood — the blood of our own countrymen.

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manner of meeting my earnest wishes to have an opportunity of seeing him, and exchanging senti-

“ My lords, I have better reasons, perhaps, than many of your lordships for desiring peace upon the terms I have described. I know the strength and preparation of the House of Bourbon; I know the defenceless, unprepared condition of this country. I know not by what mismanagement we are reduced to this situation; and when I consider, who are the men by whom a war, in the outset at least, must be conducted, can I but wish for peace? Let them not screen themselves behind the want of intelligence — they had intelligence: I know they had. If they had not, they are criminal; and their excuse is their crime. But I will tell these young ministers the true source of intelligence. It is sagacity. Sagacity to compare causes and effects; to judge the present state of things, and discern the future by a careful review of the past. Oliver Cromwell, who astonished mankind by his intelligence, did not derive it from spies in the cabinet of every prince in Europe; he drew it from the cabinet of his own sagacious mind. He observed facts, and traced them forward to their consequences. From what was, he concluded what must be, and he never was deceived. In the present situation of affairs, I think it would be treachery to the nation to conceal from them their real circumstances; and with respect to a foreign enemy, I know that all concealments are vain and useless. They are as well acquainted with the actual force and weakness of this country, as any of the King's servants. This is no time for silence, or reserve. I charge the ministers with the highest crimes that men in their stations can be guilty of. I charge them with having destroyed all content and unanimity at home, by a series of oppressive, unconstitutional measures; and with having betrayed and delivered up the nation defenceless to a foreign enemy.

“ Their utmost vigour has reached no farther than to a fruitless, protracted negotiation. When they should have acted, they have contented themselves with talking ‘about it, Goddess, and about it.’ If we do not stand forth, and do our duty in the present crisis, the nation is irretrievably undone. I despise the little policy of concealments. You ought to know the whole of your situation. If the information be new to the ministry, let them take care to profit by it. I mean to rouse, to alarm the nation — to rouse the ministry, if possible, who seem to awake to nothing but the preservation of their places — to awaken the King.

“ Early in the last spring, a motion was made in parliament, for inquiring into the state of the navy, and an augmentation of six thousand seamen was offered to the ministry. They refused to give us any insight into the condition of the navy, and rejected the augmentation. Early in June they received advice of a commencement of hostilities by

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ments, as far as he will give leave, with a person, for whose handsome conduct and great abilities I have a very real and high esteem.

a Spanish armament which had warned the King's garrison to quit an island belonging to his Majesty. From that to the 12th of September, as if nothing had happened, they lay dormant. Not a man was raised, not a single ship was put into commission. From the 12th of September, when they heard of the first blow being actually struck, we are to date the beginning of their preparations for defence. Let us now inquire, my lords, what expedition they have used, what vigour they have exerted. We have heard wonders of the diligence employed in impressing, of the large bounties offered, and the number of ships put into commission. These have been, for some time past, the constant topics of ministerial boast and triumph. Without regarding the description, let us look to the substance. I tell your lordships that, with all this vigour and expedition, they have not, in a period of considerably more than two months, raised ten thousand seamen. I mention that number, meaning to speak largely, though in my own breast, I am convinced that the number does not exceed eight thousand. But it is said they have ordered forty ships of the line into commission. My lords, upon this subject I can speak with knowledge — I have been conversant in these matters, and draw my information from the greatest and most respectable naval authority that ever existed in this country — I mean the late Lord Anson. The merits of that great man are not so universally known, nor his memory so warmly respected as he deserved. To his wisdom, to his experience, and care, (and I speak it with pleasure) the nation owes the glorious naval successes of the last war. The state of facts laid before parliament in the year 1756, so entirely convinced me of the injustice done to his character that in spite of the popular clamours raised against him, in direct opposition to the complaints of the merchants, and of the whole city, (whose favour I am supposed to court upon all occasions) I replaced him at the head of the Admiralty; and I thank God that I had resolution enough to do so. Instructed by this great seamen, I do affirm, that forty ships of the line, with their necessary attendant frigates, to be properly manned, require forty thousand seamen. If your lordships are surprised at this assertion, you will be more so, when I assure you, that in the last war, this country maintained eighty-five thousand seamen, and employed them all. Now, my lords, the peace establishment of your navy, supposing it complete and effective, (which by the by ought to be known) is sixteen thousand men. Add to these the number newly raised, and you have about twenty-five thousand men to man your fleet. I shall come presently to the application of this force, such