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THE
HISTORY
OF
MODERN EUROPE.

PART III.

FROM THE PEACE OF PARIS IN 1763, TO THE TREATY OF AMIENS IN 1802.

LETTER I.

A view of the Situation of Great Britain consequent on the Termination of the late War. Approaching Dissensions with the American Colonies. A. D. 1764—1775.

THE peace of 1763 left the nations of Europe under the pressure of an enormous taxation, one of the many and never-failing results of a protracted war. The reduction of the armies at the same time dispersed a number of men whose military habits had now rendered them but little calculated for the employments of honest industry, many of whom, in various countries, swelled the catalogue of crimes; while others sought their livelihood on the Ural and the Volga, in the colonies of Russia; but America became the chief receptacle for the superfluous population of Europe. In addition to these circumstances, the booty procured in war, the treasures of the East Indies annually imported, the rapid accumulation of fortunes from the plantations in the West Indies, with a thousand instances of successful enterprise and good fortune which the chance of war had thrown in their way, had multiplied the wants of life, and the capricious claims of luxury in Great Britain had increased in an incredible degree.

The conquests which the British arms had achieved, added to the policy of government, ever fond of increasing its patronage, had greatly augmented the number of lucrative offices; and as the desire for obtaining such places could only be gratified at the pleasure of the court, a much larger proportion than heretofore of the country gentlemen and landed proprietors took up their residence in the metropolis, committing their estates to the care of their stewards; and as they thereby unavoidably enlarged their expenses, and involved themselves in debt, they were reduced to the necessity of raising their rents. The consequence of this was, that the oppressed people were soon driven to despair, while their superiors were deaf to their complaints. Upwards of twenty thousand Irishmen in a short time transported themselves to America, and many thousands from the Highlands of Scotland and the islands of the Hebrides also sought an asylum where they might perpetuate the customs of their ancestors, and obtain the means of subsistence in the western world. This multitude of recent emigrants to America, adopting a mode of life conformable to nature and the principles of primitive equality, contributed much to the cultivation of the lands, and in various other respects helped by their influence to accelerate that disruption with the mother-country, which was now rapidly approaching.

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