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THE
LIFE
OF
ROBERT, LORD CLIVE:

COLLECTED FROM THE FAMILY PAPERS

COMMUNICATED BY

THE EARL OF POWIS.

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL

SIR JOHN MALCOLM, G.C.B. F.R.S. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

WITH A PORTRAIT AND MAP.

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We have often had occasion to notice the intimate footing on which Clive had lived for many years with Mr. Vansittart, and the high opinion he entertained of his virtue and abilities. Though condemning the dethronement of Meer Jaffier, he ascribed the chief blame of that measure to Mr. Holwell, and believed that his friend Van. (as he termed him) had acted from necessity: but when Cossim Ali was left uncontrolled to pursue his own course, and the Governor, acting on the system of non-interference with the Nabob's authority, abandoned to his mercy the rich Hindus and others, who had long looked to the English for protection, Clive was unqualified in his condemnation of a policy which he deemed calculated to injure the reputation, and with it the strength, of the British Government. The opinions he gave on this subject were in direct opposition to those contained in the minutes and memorials published by Mr. Vansittart in defence of his conduct; and their wide difference on a subject of such importance led to their being of opposite parties in the India House.

Mr. Sullivan became the advocate of Mr. Vansittart, whose modesty, moderation, and great virtue he contrasted with the bold, grasping ambition of Lord Clive; and this circumstance, more than any other, tended to loosen those

bonds by which the two friends had been so long united.

When persons are in the situation of Lord Clive and Mr. Vansittart, every trifle obtains importance, and serves to widen the breach. Lord Clive appears to have been, during the whole of his residence in England, very desirous to establish himself well at court. Among other attentions, he studied to gratify the curiosity of the King, by obtaining for him some of the most remarkable animals of the East. He wrote* several times to Mr. Vansittart to aid him in this object. Some time after his application, Lord Clive received a letter from that gentleman, intimating that he had sent home two elephants†, a rhinoceros, and a Persian mare, which he requested his Lordship would, along with his brother, Mr. Arthur Vansittart, present to his Majesty.

When these animals reached England, Mr. A.

* One of Lord Clive's letters to Mr. Vansittart is dated 17th December, 1762. The passage alluded to is as follows:—"I must again repeat my desire of having a large elephant embarked for his Majesty, if the thing be practicable, of which you must be a better judge than I, who are upon the spot; and if you can send me any curiosities, such as antelopes, hog-deer, nilgows or lynxes, I shall be much obliged to you."

† One of the elephants was so large that it could not be embarked.

Vansittart requested Lord Clive would accompany him to court, to present them. The following answer to this letter shows the first impression which this transaction made upon his Lordship's mind.

“ Upon the receipt of your letter,” Lord Clive observes, “ enclosing a copy of a paragraph from your brother, I can plainly perceive, that Mr. Vansittart, declining to comply with the request I made him, of purchasing and sending home, on my account, an elephant, to be presented to his Majesty by me, has taken that hint to send one home on his own. This unkind treatment I neither deserved nor expected from Mr. Vansittart. I am persuaded his Majesty will not think I am wanting in that respect which is due to him, if I decline presenting, in another person's name, an elephant which I intended to present in my own. At the same time, I shall take care his Majesty be informed of the cause of my desiring to be excused attending you to his Majesty, with Mr. Vansittart's presents.”

An explanation took place upon this subject ; and it appears by a letter * from Lord Clive to

* In this letter, which is dated January, 1764, Lord Clive observes ; “ I am sorry there should be any mistake about the elephant ; and although I was somewhat affected at first at the commission you gave me to present the elephant to

Mr. Vansittart in the following year, that some blame attached to the captain of the ship, who acted, according to Lord Clive's opinion, at the instigation of Mr. Sullivan. But it is a justice we owe to the memory of the latter gentleman to state, that Lord Clive was in such a frame of mind at the time he listened to this accusation, as readily to believe that every thing (whether public or private) which tended to annoy or injure him originated with or was aggravated by, his rival for supremacy at the India House.

Though several causes combined to interrupt that cordiality which had once subsisted between Lord Clive and Mr. Vansittart, no open rupture took place. The latter had left Calcutta before his successor arrived, and returned to his native country with a moderate fortune*, and a character for integrity that was never impeached, even by those who censured most severely the weakness and impolicy of many measures of his government.

Lord Clive, in the hurry of leaving England,

his Majesty in your name, instead of my own, yet the thing in itself appears to me to be of too trifling a nature for either of us to think any more about it. Your brother will inform you in what manner Sampson has acted, owing, I believe, to the instigation of Sullivan."

* Mr. Walsh writes to Lord Clive, that Mr. Vansittart told him his fortune did not exceed 2,500*l.* per annum.