

therefore responsible for its occurrences. Not surely universally, nor directly. I should be unwilling to make even Lord North's administration answerable for all the actions of Butler's rangers; and I should be still more sorry to make all England amenable either for Lord North's administration, or for Butler's rangers. Was the American war an unanimous and heartfelt war of the people? Were the best patriots and the brightest luminaries of our Senate for, or against it? Chatham declared that if America fell she would fall like the strong man—that she would embrace the pillars of our constitution and perish beneath its ruins. Burke, Fox, and Barré kindled even the breasts of St. Stephen's chapel against it; and William Pitt pronounced it a war against the sacred cause of Liberty. If so, the loss of our colonies was a blessing, compared with the triumph of those principles that would have brought Washington home in chains. If Chatham and Pitt were our friends in denouncing the injustice of this war, then Washington was only nominally our foe in resisting it; and he was as much the enemy of the worst enemies of our constitution, as if he had fought against the return of the Stuarts on the banks of the Spey or the Thames. I say, therefore, with full and free charity to those who think differently, that the American war was disgraceful only to those who were its abettors, and that the honor of Englishmen is redeemed in proportion as they deprecate its principles and deplore its details. Had my theme even involved English character more than it does, I could still defend it. If my Canadian critic alleges that a poet may not blame the actions of his country, I meet his allegation, and deny it. No doubt a poet ought not for ever to harp and carp upon the faults of his country; but *he may be her moral censor, and he must not be her parasite*. If an English poet under Edward III. had only dared to leave one generous line of commiseration to the memory of Sir William Wallace, how much he would have raised our estimation of the moral character of the age! There is a present and a future in national character, as well as a past, and the character of the present age is best provided for by impartial and generous sentiments respecting the past. The twentieth century will not think the worse of the nineteenth for regretting the American war. I know the slender importance of my own works. I am contending, however, against a false principle of delicacy that would degrade poetry itself if it were adopted;—but it never will be adopted.

I therefore regret nothing in the historical allusions of my poem, except the mistake about your father. Nor, though I have spoken freely of American affairs, do I mean to deny that your native tribes