

appears to have been preëminently a man of business, fertile in resource and wise in the invention and adaptation of financial expedients. He busied himself with the details as well as with the great interests of the Treasury. He prevented misappropriations and extravagant expenditure. In an age of financial confusion, he attempted to introduce into the management of the English Treasury some system of order and some conscientiousness of responsibility. The accomplishment of this task was, from its very nature, extremely difficult, and was likely to earn him more hatred than love and more blame than glory. The conscientious labors of Mr. Elliot have given us a far better and more truthful picture of Godolphin than has hitherto been found in the pages of any historian or biographer.

"Sidney, Earl of Godolphin" *

SIDNEY, Earl of Godolphin and Knight of the Garter, affords an excellent historical example of the undeserved obscurity which may oppress the name and reputation of a more than mediocre man who has the misfortune to live in an age remarkable for startling dynastic revolutions and brilliant foreign wars, and who by fortune or from preference has served the state in the important but unobtrusive character of the minister of its finances. Born in the just waning reign of Charles I., and known at first as one of the courtiers of Charles II., Godolphin was appointed a Commissioner of the Treasury in 1679. He was promoted to be First Lord under James II. and filled the same position in the reign of William III., and was made Lord High Treasurer of England by Queen Anne in 1702. Important as the management of the finances undoubtedly is, and essential as a sound financial policy must be in time of war, it is nevertheless quite possible that the minister who provides the supplies may pale into insignificance beside the general who wins the victories, or the great or even mediocre statesman who directs foreign affairs. For nearly two centuries Godolphin has been rarely thought of, while Marlborough and Bolingbroke, Sunderland, Rochester and Buckingham have absorbed the attention of those who contemplate the political and warlike measures of his age. If Lord Godolphin has been remembered, it has been with a suspicion that he endeavored to serve two masters—William and James,—and was deeply implicated in the plots of the Jacobites. Mr. Elliot has made a strong plea in behalf of his loyalty to King William, but the argument rests almost entirely upon the intrinsic improbability of his treachery. We are inclined to doubt whether the real truth as to the intrigues of that day can ever be fully known, and until it is, it cannot be said that Godolphin, whose relations with Marlborough were most intimate, is above suspicion of disloyalty.

But it can hardly be thought strange that a semi-obscurity envelopes the history of this Lord High Treasurer, for aside from those ever dwelt-upon and brilliantly recounted scenes of the historic drama of that age—aside from those which catch and hold the eye of even the not too superficial observer,—there existed in the Earl of Godolphin himself few qualities to command remembrance or special admiration. He was neither a wit, a *bon vivant*, nor a man of fascinating personality; nor in that lettered age did he either cultivate the Muses or become the patron of those who did. He possessed no oratorical gifts so far as our meagre chronicles inform us, and made no impression in Parliament. He ap-

* Sidney, Earl of Godolphin. By Hon. Hugh Elliot. 8s. London: Longmans, Green & Co.