The life of Augustus, viscount Keppel, admiral of the White, and first lord of the admiralty in 1782-3

Keppel Thomas Robert
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THE LIFE

OF

AUGUSTUS

VISCONT KEPEL,

ADMIRAL OF THE WHITE,

AND FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY IN 1782—3.

BY THE

HON. & REV. THOMAS KEPEL,

RECTOR OF WARMAN ST. MARY, NORFOLK.

"Proprium humani ingenii est, odiose, quem lassiris."

Tacitus, in ref. Agric. c. 42.

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1775 TO 1778.

In 1775 commenced the war with our American
colonies, which has impressed so indelible a stain on
the page of British history.

By no one was this unnatural conflict regarded
with more abhorrence than by Admiral Keppel.
While numbers of naval officers flocked to the
Admiralty, offering their services, and requesting
employment, Admiral Keppel kept aloof, declaring
that, “If the necessities of the times called for
his services, and he knew that it was the King's desire, he was ready to do his duty, but *not in the line of America.*

No sooner were these hostilities commenced than preparations of a warlike nature were made both by France and Spain. Their designs could not be mistaken; but no efforts were made by the British Government to counteract them until the close of the following year, when the formidable armaments in the ports of France aroused ministers from their lethargy.

Keppel, who, on the 6th of February of this year, was advanced to the rank of Vice-Admiral of the Red, received, in the month of November, a message from Lord Sandwich, delivered by Sir Hugh Palliser, stating that his Majesty requested to know whether, in case of a war with the continental powers, he would undertake the charge of the home fleet? To this he replied, that he was ready to attend and give his answer in person to his Majesty. He was accordingly admitted to a private audience, and, at the personal solicitation of the King, consented to assume the command of the Channel fleet. It was not, however, without some misgivings that he found himself about to trust his hard-earned fame to ministers whom he knew to be unfriendly towards him, and in whom he placed not the slightest confidence. These feelings were not confined to his own breast. His friend and