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OF THE RARE FELICITY OF ENGLAND,
SO RICH IN GENIUS AND CAPACITY FOR AFFAIRS,
THAT SHE CAN SPARE FROM HER SERVICE
SUCH MEN AS HIM.

SPEECHES

OF

Rare section

HENRY LORD BROUGHAM,

UPON QUESTIONS RELATING TO

PUBLIC RIGHTS, DUTIES, AND INTERESTS;

WITH

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTIONS,

AND

A CRITICAL DISSERTATION

UPON THE ELOQUENCE OF THE ANCIENTS.

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. I.

EDINBURGH:

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK;

LONGMAN, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS;

RIDGWAY AND SONS; AND CHARLES KNIGHT AND CO. LONDON.

M.DCCC.XXXVIII.

V3.7L78

A838.1

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P R E F A C E.

THE plan of the present publication is sufficiently obvious. The Introductions to the different Speeches are intended to elucidate the History of the Measures discussed, and of the Periods to which they relate. But the most satisfactory, indeed the only accurate, manner of giving the History of the Times, must always be to give an account of the Persons who bore the chief part in their transactions. This is more or less true of all annals ; but it is peculiarly so of political annals. The course of state affairs, their posture at any given period, and the nature of the different measures propounded from time to time, can only be well understood, by giving an accurate representation of the characters of those who figured most remarkably upon the scene.

It is not, however, by those pieces of composition which abound in many histories, under the name of "Characters," that any thing like this knowledge can be conveyed. Without any regard to fine writing, measured and balanced periods, or neat and pointed antitheses, the personages must be described such as they really were, by a just mixture of general remarks, and reference to particular passages in their lives. In no other way can they be made known; in no other way, indeed, can the very first requisite of such sketches be attained,—the exhibition of the peculiarities that marked the originals,—the preservation of the individuality of each.

The works of some of our most celebrated writers, both ancient and modern, deserve to be studied, with the view of avoiding as much as it is possible their manner of performing this most important of the Historian's duties. The main object in those compositions plainly is, to turn sentences, and not to paint characters. The same plan is pursued in all cases. Is an able ruler, and one of virtuous life, to be described? The author considers what qualities are wanting to constitute great capacity for affairs. So he hangs together the epithets of wise, and prudent, and vigorous, and pro-

vident ; and never fails to bestow on the individual great caution in forming his plans, and much promptitude in executing them. But discrimination must be shewn. So the author reflects how the excess of a virtue may become a vice ; and therefore the hero of the tale has prudence without timidity—boldness without rashness—and a great many things without a great many other things. Accordingly, we find the produce of a workmanship as useless as it is easy, to be a set of characters all made nearly in the same mould, without distinction of colour, or feature, or stature ; displaying the mere abstractions of human nature, and applying, almost equally, one set to any able or virtuous person, and the other to any person of inferior capacity and of wicked life. The Speeches put into the mouths of great men by the ancient Historians are from the same kind of workshop—Cato is made to deliver himself exactly like Cæsar ; that is, they both speak as Sallust wrote.

In the attempts which these volumes contain, to represent individuals, for the purpose of recording the History of their times, all ambition of fine writing has been laid aside, and nothing, but the facts of each case, and the impressions actually left upon the writer's

memory, has ever been regarded in the least degree. With one only exception, the sketches are the result of personal observation, and in general of intimate acquaintance; so that each individual may be said to have sitten for his picture. No sacrifice has ever been made to attain the unsubstantial and unavailing praise of felicitous composition. Nor has any the least door been left open to feelings of a worse kind, whether amicable or hostile. The relations of friendship and enmity, whether political or personal, have been wholly disregarded, and one only object kept steadily in view—the likeness of the picture, whether critical or moral.*

* In describing the persons who mainly contributed to abolish the Slave Trade, the reader will perceive that the much-honoured name of Z. Macaulay is omitted. He had not, in fact, ceased to live when that Introduction was printed, and hopes were still entertained of his remaining some time longer amongst us. This great omission, therefore, cannot now be supplied. But it may still be recorded, that after Wilberforce and Clarkson, there is no one whose services in the cause as well of Emancipation as of Abolition, have been more valuable. It is indeed saying all, to say, as with strict accuracy we may, that of Emancipation he was the Clarkson. His practical acquaintance, too, with the whole question, from actual residence both in Africa and the West Indies, was of material use through every part of the great controversy which he almost lived to see happily closed. But his laborious habits, his singularly calm judgment, his great acuteness, the absolute self-denial which he ever shewed in all that related to it, and the self-devotion with which he sacrificed his life to its promotion, can only be conceived

It is conceived that some good service may be rendered to the cause of human improvement, which the author has ever had so much at heart, by the present publication, because its tendency is to fix the public attention upon some of the subjects most important to the interests of mankind. The repression, or at least the subjugation, of party feelings, must be always of material benefit to the community, and tend to remove a very serious obstruction from the great course in which legislation is advancing. Party connexion is indeed beneficial as long as it only bands together those who, having formed their opinions for themselves, are desirous of giving them full effect. But so much of abuse has generally attended such leagues, that reflecting men are now induced to reject them altogether. Their greatest evil certainly is the one most difficult to be shunned—their tendency to deliver over the many to the guidance of the few, in matters where no dominion ever should be exercised—to make the opinions adopted by leading men pass current, without any reflec-

by his fellow-labourers who witnessed these rare merits; and still less is it possible to represent adequately the entire want of all care about the glory of his good works, which made him indeed prefer doing his duty in silence, in obscurity, and in all but neglect.

tion, among their followers—to enfeeble and corrupt the public mind, by discouraging men from thinking for themselves—, and to lead multitudes into courses which they have no kind of interest in pursuing, in order that some designing individuals may gain by their folly or their crimes. As society advances, such delusions will become more and more difficult to practise; and it may safely be affirmed, that hundreds now-a-days discharge the sacred duty to themselves and their country, of forming their own opinions upon reflection, for one that had disenthralled himself thirty years ago.

ERRATA.

Page 373, line 25, for *vice-royalty*, read *foreign command*.

— 407, — 4, for *found*, read *framed*.

— 473, — 11; dele *but*.

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