LORD ELLENBOROUGH'S DIARY

1828–1830

VOL. I.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

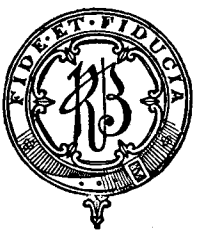
A POLITICAL DIARY

1828–1830

BY

EDWARD LAW
LORD ELLENBOROUGH

EDITED BY LORD COLCHESTER



IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON
RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen
1881

PREFACE.

EDWARD LAW, second Lord Ellenborough,[1] the author of this Diary, was born September 8, 1790. He was the eldest son of Edward Law, afterwards Attorney-General and Chief Justice of England, who was raised to the peerage as Baron Ellenborough in 1802, son of Edmund Law, Bishop of Carlisle, author of 'Law's Theory of Religion.' He was educated at Eton and St. John's College, Cambridge. Among his Eton contemporaries was the late Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, who, though his senior, survived him nearly nine years, and with whom his personal friendship lasted throughout life, though just at the period included in the accompanying Diary he seems to have felt some dissatisfaction with his conduct as an ambassador serving under the Ministry of which he was a member. Lord Ellenborough throughout life felt a warm interest in Eton, but always spoke rather slightingly of his recollections of the University. Something of this appears in the remarks he makes on Academic voters at the time of Peel's defeat by Sir R. Inglis at Oxford. Probably the typical College Don of the days of Gibbon and Horace Walpole still lingered to a great extent in the earlier years of the present century. Lord Ellenborough used to say that the Fellows of St. John's only realised the evil of the Walcheren expedition when some one calculated

[1] Created an Earl after his return from India, 1844.

the amount of its cost in bottles of port wine. His University career, however, was not altogether undistinguished, as he was the author of the Prize Ode on the dethronement and exile of the House of Braganza, which figures in the 'Musæ Cantabrigienses.'

After leaving Cambridge, Lord Ellenborough made a tour in Sicily, then occupied and defended by the English, and the only part of the continent of Europe which the great struggle with Napoleon did not close to English travellers.

Growing up at the moment when England's great military triumphs were commencing in the Peninsula, Lord Ellenborough's first ambition was a military career. This, however, did not meet with his father's sanction.

On entering public life, his wish, he used to say, was to become a 'military statesman,' an idea which naturally might suggest itself when the conduct of a great war was the most engrossing topic of Parliamentary discussion, and the military administration from home, perhaps somewhat unjustly, charged with grievous shortcomings. Throughout life Lord Ellenborough retained an eager interest in all military questions; the progress of a campaign, the positions of contending armies, the geographical character of a theatre of war, were always favourite subjects of attention with him. From the commencement of his Parliamentary career he was strongly of opinion that the principal road to influence of any kind in English public life was through the power of speech. He set himself diligently to the cultivation of oratory as an art, and though undoubtedly possessed of great natural gifts of eloquence, he attributed mainly to such diligence and study the position he attained as a speaker of the first rank. He was convinced of the maxim 'orator fit,'

and on this principle devoted his leisure to the assiduous study of what he thought the best models of ancient and modern eloquence. Not many years before the close of his career, he was occupying himself with a systematic perusal of Lucan, whom he considered 'as not perhaps a great poet, but to be looked upon as one of the first of orators.'

Lord Ellenborough (then the Hon. E. Law) entered Parliament in the year 1813. He was returned to the House of Commons, like so many who afterwards attained eminence, for a small close borough, the almost forgotten constituency of St. Michael's, in Cornwall. It was the second year of the Liverpool Cabinet, a Cabinet 'doomed to death' by the anticipations of lookers-on from the moment of its formation, yet destined to last from 1812 to 1827, when the one chief was withdrawn who could form an effective link between its discordant elements. His father, the Chief Justice Lord Ellenborough, was a supporter of this Ministry. Introduced to office by Addington, he had followed him into the Talents Cabinet of 1806–7, had sided with him in its internal differences, and, after being engaged with him in partial opposition to the succeeding administration, had now seen him reunited to the old followers of Pitt as Home Secretary of the Cabinet formed after the death of Mr. Perceval. Of this Government Mr. Law was returned as a general supporter. He stipulated, however, for the right of independent action on the Catholic question; and, in spite of private ties soon afterwards formed, he, in some respects, after the close of the war, took a separate course on foreign policy.

In the latter part of this year he married Lady Octavia Stewart, sister of the then Foreign Minister, Lord Castlereagh, a union terminated by her death

within six years. He visited Vienna during the residence there of his distinguished brother-in-law as the representative of England in the Congress which in the year following met in that city to regulate the settlement of Europe. He thus naturally acquired a deeper interest in the foreign politics of England, and opportunities of a wider insight into European affairs, as well as a personal acquaintance with many of the principal personages of the political and diplomatic society of the Continent.

He never became, however, an indiscriminating adherent of the policy of his eminent relative. One of the acts of the Congress which excited much attention, and attracted much criticism, was the annexation of Genoa to the Sardinian kingdom. Genoa, which with Venice and Lucca was, down to the French revolution, one of the few solitary survivors of the Italian Republics of former ages, had, after a brief existence in a revolutionised form as the 'Ligurian Republic,' been swallowed up in the French Empire. At the fall of Napoleon's power the English admiral on the coast had given—without, it was said, full authority—a sort of promise that the Genoese, if they took part against France, should be restored to their independence. The contrary decision of Lord Castlereagh has been vindicated in a great measure by events. At the time, too, it was difficult to show how an alternative could have been found. The oligarchical commonwealth which had lasted for nearly three centuries was precisely one of those governments which may endure for long, but can never be recalled to life. A revived democracy on the 'Ligurian' pattern would at that time have been tolerated by none of the Continental Powers. Even if a petty principality was desired by the people, it was important not to leave so important a seaport in the hands of a State unable to

defend it against an invader. Lord Ellenborough, however, with the view perhaps natural to his age, shared the sentiments of those who could not acquiesce in the transfer to an alien prince of the commonwealth of Andrea Doria, in contradiction, as was alleged, to the British promises on which the inhabitants had relied. He therefore declined the offer of Lord Castlereagh to appoint him one of the Commission for carrying this provision of the treaty into effect.

His desire at that time for the future of Italy—a country which he frequently visited during the years immediately following—if perhaps unattainable at that moment, at any rate anticipated much of what he lived to see realised. When in 1859–60 expressions of sympathy for Italy were put forward on every side, he remarked, 'I expressed my sympathy forty-five years ago.' In a letter to Lord Brougham, published at the close of that year, he described the wish he had then entertained for the establishment of a large State in North Italy, which would have had every motive to join with Austria in closing the Alps against France, if assured of its own independence. It is curious that Lord Brougham, who at the outbreak of the war of 1859 was rather hostile to the Sardinian cause, vindicated his consistency as an old opponent of the treaties of 1815 by reminding the House of Lords that what he had most attacked was the handing over to Sardinia of Genoa.[1]

In the year 1816 Mr. Law's name appears as speaking against some portions of the Treaties of Vienna,

[1] Lord Ellenborough, however, was not blind to the objections to the method by which Italian unity was effected. Thus in 1860, while openly sympathising with what he thought the straightforward course of Garibaldi, he thought the conduct of the Piedmontese Government to neighbours with whom it was nominally at peace ought to be called 'piratical.'

especially as regarded the Netherland barrier, though, when the kingdom so created had been established for fifteen years, he considered, as his Diary will show, its downfall as an event to be regretted on European grounds. He took some part in the debates on the famous Six Acts, of which he was neither a supporter on all points, nor an unmitigated opponent, apparently considering them as not uncalled for, but as carried in some respects further than he could approve.

The death of his father at the close of 1818 elevated him to the Upper House, in which he was destined to sit for more than half a century.[1]

The accession of George IV. in 1820 was followed by the famous Bill of Pains and Penalties against Queen Caroline. Lord Ellenborough was one of those who opposed the Bill, though of opinion that if it were to be passed the Divorce Clause ought, in consistency, to form a part of it, as, if the evidence against the Queen was held sufficient to justify such a measure, it was, he thought, preposterous to consider that she ought to remain the King's wife.

The year 1821 was the commencement of a period of revolutions in several parts of Europe which awakened alarm or sympathy in almost every part of the Continent. The circular of Lord Castlereagh protesting against the theory of intervention put forward by the Courts of the Holy Alliance, while at the same time it censured the revolution at Naples by which the King

[1] The death of Lord Ellenborough's father was shortly followed by that of his wife, a loss felt by him long and deeply. In the last years of his life he had restored an old chapel on his property in Gloucestershire. He here erected a memorial to her memory, with a Latin inscription attributing to her 'whatever good he had done or thought in his life.' The letter on her death to Cardinal Consalvi, whom they had known intimately in Italy, will be found in Cretineau Joly's *Mémoires du Cardinal Consalvi.*

had been forced to concede the democratic Constitution of Spain in 1812, was the subject of much criticism in and out of Parliament. While declining to accept the principles of the Congresses of Troppau and Laybach, the English Cabinet were disposed to acquiesce in the Austrian intervention agreed upon at the latter meeting for the purpose of opposing the ascendency of Carbonarism. Lord Ellenborough vindicated in the House of Lords the language used by Lord Castlereagh, considering that a military revolt such as that which had occurred at Naples could never be regarded as a sure basis for liberty, but rather a precedent for setting up a dictatorship at the will of a despotic soldiery. At the same time he avowed strong sympathy with the Italians in their wish to reform the governments, whose evils he knew from having seen their operation. And as the question approached a violent solution, as those whom his Italian friends would have called 'barbari' moved southward to restore the absolute monarchy of the Two Sicilies, his feelings were still more warmly enlisted on the anti-Austrian side, and he spoke strongly in favour of an English mediation between the contending parties.

By the tragical death of Lord Castlereagh (then become Marquis of Londonderry) on the eve of the Congress of Verona, the direction of British foreign policy was transferred to Mr. Canning. It may be enquired why there was not more sympathy between Lord Ellenborough and Mr. Canning, introducing, as the latter Minister did, a bolder and, some might say, a more generous system of policy than that of his predecessor, with whose ideas, in spite of family ties and personal friendship, Lord Ellenborough had never been altogether agreed. But men do not always appear to their con-

temporaries as they do to the generation after them. To us Mr. Canning stands out as at once the foremost orator of the Parliament of England sixty years back, and as the fearless Foreign Minister who, perhaps at times with too much parade, asserted the right of England to an independent course among the Powers of Europe, and to a place in their councils worthy of its power and its history. To many of those among whom he moved his individual relations to colleagues and to rivals had as much to do with the estimate formed of him as the prominent acts of his official career which strike the attention of posterity. And as to these relations, he no doubt inspired very widespread distrust. Parts of his early career seemed to give plausibility to the view which regarded him as an interested intriguer. The grounds for such a charge, justly or unjustly, were drawn from his behaviour towards Castlereagh during the Portland Administration, and towards Addington after Pitt's retirement in 1801. No one was more likely to be influenced by such impressions as one who was both the brother-in-law of Castlereagh and the son of one of the closest friends of Addington.

Lord Ellenborough after this period inclined rather more than previously to the Opposition. He put himself in the forefront of the attack upon the Ministerial policy in reference to the French intervention in Spain in 1823. The nature and origin of the Constitution established by the Spanish Revolutionists were open to the same objections as in the case of Naples. But Lord Ellenborough, in common with many others, felt it a discredit to England that French influence should be forcibly exerted once more in the country which a few years before had been so gloriously rescued from French dominion by British victories. It is probable that the

Foreign Minister's personal sentiments, and those of his chief, Lord Liverpool, were not so widely different from those of the speakers who were most impatient of their neutrality. Those who were outside the Government could hardly know, what the Cabinet seem to have had reason to believe, that the Powers of the Holy Alliance were ready, if necessary, actively to support France as their agent, and that in attempting to protect Spain we might, with no ally but those revolutionary forces which Canning compared to the winds in the bag of Æolus, have been involved in a struggle with the greater part of the Continent.

Lord Ellenborough was not reconciled to what he thought the abandonment of Spain by that recognition of the independence of South America by which Canning afterwards claimed to have called a New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old. Nor was he much influenced by the famous speech on sending troops to Portugal, which, according to Canning's biographer, was received with delighted applause from all parts of the House except from some of those behind him who leant to the doctrines of the Continental Alliance. He probably thought that its defiant tone incurred for a minor object the dangers that would have attended a similar course with regard to Spain. That treaty obligations required the despatch of troops to Portugal he admitted, but declined to see in it any great cause for enthusiasm.

In 1827 the illness of Lord Liverpool snapped the thread that held together the two portions of the Cabinet he had presided over so long. The most decidedly Tory section refused to follow Mr. Canning as his successor. Partly by promotions from offices of lower rank, partly by accessions from his old oppo-

nents, the new Prime Minister endeavoured to maintain a Coalition Cabinet which should defy the seceders, while steering clear of extreme principles on either side. 'The Whigs join us in a body,' wrote Lord Palmerston, now for the first time a Cabinet Minister. This was true of Lord Lansdowne, and several of the leaders of that party. But Lord Grey, and those who were especially connected with him, stood aloof, distrusting the new Minister and the heterogeneous combination which he directed. Lord Grey[1] was the member of the Opposition whom Lord Ellenborough was most disposed to co-operate with. He took an early opportunity of expressing himself a determined opponent of the Ministry. In this he was probably actuated both by distrust of Canning and regard for the opinions of Lord Grey. But he was thus again brought into connection, in spite of difference on the Roman Catholic question and some other points, with the party which came to be led by the Duke of Wellington. He had hoped, as this volume will show, for an ultimate junction between the Duke and Lord Grey, a hope not so unreasonable at that time as subsequent events might make it appear. He succeeded, however, eventually in bringing Lord Rosslyn into the Duke's Ministry, and Lord Rosslyn, hitherto an ally of Lord Grey, brought, as will be seen, some additional support from outside.

In a few months from his attainment of the Premiership Mr. Canning died. It may be a question whether he could permanently have held together the hitherto discordant materials of his Administration. The task was too much for his successor, Lord Goderich, under whose leadership it fell to pieces without meeting Parliament.

[1] They were distantly related through the family of Lord Ellenborough's mother.

Thus the ground was left open for the Duke of Wellington. It was attempted to form again a Government on the basis of that of Lord Liverpool, to bring together those who had taken opposite courses at the disruption consequent on his retirement. One or two of the most ultra of the High Tories, such as Lord Eldon and Lord Westmoreland, were left out to smoothe the way for those who returned from the Coalition camp. The Whig element of the Ministry of 1827 was left to fall back into Opposition.

Lord Grey's attitude to the new Ministry was understood not to be unfriendly. Lord Ellenborough, who had acted in Opposition with many of its members,[1] became a member of the Cabinet as Privy Seal. Then the attempted reunion of the friends of Mr. Canning with their old colleagues ere long led to a new separation. How the change of policy on the 'Catholic Question' by the Prime Minister created a still more bitter and more formidable split in the ranks hitherto most united in his support, and how the alienation of many of his friends, joined to the events on the Continent in 1830, led to the fall of his Government, and with it of the old Parliamentary system of England, these volumes will relate. As to Lord Ellenborough's own position, it may be observed that the office he at first held was one imposing no active duties and at the same time enjoying an official precedence which causes it to be usually reserved for some one belonging to the higher ranks of the peerage. He felt some dissatisfaction in holding a dignified sinecure with no duties except a general attention to the business of the Cabinet. He devoted himself, however, actively to the foreign ques-

[1] It seems that, had the Goderich Ministry met Parliament, he was to have moved the amendment to the Address in the House of Lords.

tions which came before it. It may appear as though in some respects his sympathies at this time as regards European affairs differed from those he expressed before or afterwards, as the early champion of Italy and Spain, or as, in later days, the advocate of Poland. But, in fact, Lord Ellenborough always was averse both to the principles of despotism and of democracy, though at particular times one of what he regarded as two opposite evils may have appeared the more to call for opposition. During most of the time embraced by this Diary Dom Miguel was apparently accepted by the Portuguese nation as king, and Lord Ellenborough agreed with his colleagues in deprecating either a European war or a general letting loose of the revolutionary party of Southern Europe in order to reverse their verdict. As regards Greece, there is nothing to show if he had ever regarded its cause more favourably. But the numerous instances, not merely of barbarous cruelty, but cruelty accompanied with gross breaches of faith, which alienated from the Greek cause many who saw much of the struggle on the spot, may reasonably have had the same effect on intelligent observers at a distance. Lord Ellenborough had also a strong conviction, dating perhaps from what he remembered at the time of the Congress of Vienna, of the dangers of Russian ambition and aggressiveness, which naturally led him to attach importance to the maintenance of the Turkish power.

Lord Ellenborough's desire, as he states in his remarks at the time, was to have attained to the Foreign Office on its falling vacant. Whether Lord Ellenborough or Lord Aberdeen would have been the more efficient Foreign Minister must be left to the judgment of the world. Lord Ellenborough might have incurred the charge of undue energy or rashness from opponents, but would scarcely, even by an antagonist, have been taxed

with 'antiquated imbecility.' In the power of expounding and defending a policy in Parliament, which in England is scarcely less important than any other, there could be no comparison between them.

The Indian affairs with which Lord Ellenborough was concerned after his accession to the Board of Control are not of any very great contemporary interest. It will be seen that he was already at that time in favour of the abolition of the government by the Company, a change postponed at that time, but ultimately carried out in 1858.

Most of the domestic matters treated in these volumes —matters of eager controversy in their day—have been so decisively settled as to have only a historical interest. They belong to a past phase of English politics. The only phenomenon which forms, unhappily, an exception is the chronic difficulty of dealing with Irish disorder. It is otherwise with the foreign questions which fill a large part of them. The events of the last few years have given a fresh and living interest to the past conflicts and negotiations relative to every part of the Eastern Question. Bulgaria and Roumelia, Thessaly and Candia, the Armenian frontier, the possible approach of Russia to the Euphrates, have again been topics of constant discussion in every political circle. The daily anticipations, reports, and eventual certainties as to the movements of Russian and Turkish armies in 1828–29 might seem, as it were, to belong to 1877. The perplexities which at the close of the war troubled the Cabinet of the Duke of Wellington are clearly analogous to the yet unsettled problems left behind by the war terminated by the Treaty of San Stefano. They may perhaps be worthy of perusal, not only as records of the recent past, but as having a still active bearing on the present and future of Eastern politics.