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THE SERVANT OF ALL



JAMES WILSON

THE SERVANT OF ALL
PAGES FROM THE FAMILY, SOCIAL
AND POLITICAL LIFE OF MY FATHER
JAMES WILSON

TWENTY YEARS OF MID-VICTORIAN
LIFE

BY
EMILIE I. BARRINGTON

VOL. I

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO. LTD.
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Made in Great Britain

**INSCRIBED IN LOVING MEMORY
TO MY MOTHER AND TO
MY SISTERS**

PREFACE

At their death a similar tribute was paid to two illustrious Victorians whose lives I was asked to write, I having known each intimately. In his contribution to the "Encyclopædia Britannica," Sir Robert Griffen, for some years assistant editor of the *Economist* newspaper—having thereby more incessant intercourse with Walter Bagehot than any outside Bagehot's own family,—wrote of him, "He was certainly greater than his books." G. F. Watts, R.A., a brother artist who had known Lord Leighton for more than forty years, wrote, "There was something even greater than his work, and that was the man himself."

It is mostly with the desire to pay a like tribute to my father that I have attempted to write these records of his family, social, and political life. I am his last remaining daughter, so am best able to give a full testimony to the deep affection he felt for my mother and his children, moreover to the fine qualities he ever displayed in our family life. But I should not for that reason alone have ventured to undertake such a task. Of course I am naturally partial, though I do not believe I am unduly partial, but others who have not the same reason to be favourably prejudiced have recorded in writing the virtues my father possessed, besides an intellectual mastery over many most intricate and difficult subjects, and his abnormal power of work.

Immediately following my father's death, my brother-in-law, Walter Bagehot, wrote a memoir of him as a *Supplement* to the *Economist*, which *Memoir* won high

approval from all those who knew my father best and who had appreciated his value, especially from those who had been associated in his work. Within its scope it was considered as faithful and complete a record as could have been written, and the manner in which it was treated was much praised. Its scope was, however, inevitably limited. The fact that it appears as a supplement to my father's own newspaper, and that it was written by so close a relative, entailed a certain amount of restraint. There is doubtless felt in its pages an undercurrent of warm appreciation, but it was neither the time nor the place for much enthusiastic eulogy. In writing a more personal record of my father sixty-six years after his death, I have thought well to reprint freely from this memoir, for no other pen could have expressed with a more profound understanding my father's qualities as a politician, his great gift as a financier and an economist, or could have traced with more fidelity his public career.

After they grew up, my two elder sisters kept diaries, and I have also quoted freely from these, as they give the everyday family life and the social events which occurred. These I have edited, so to speak, by slight sketches of the public events to which they refer, especially the questions brought forward in the House of Commons during the twelve years from 1847 to 1859, when my father rarely missed a sitting. Letters written by and to my father form, however, the chief original matter in these pages.

A few years ago, most unexpectedly, hidden in recesses of unused cupboards, were found a vast number of letters addressed to my father by very notable contemporaries, also many written by himself to his family. My mother, who died in 1886, had preserved these letters, but had left no record of their existence. Although showing, as it were, but side-lights on my father's character and gifts, they are valuable not only for their intrinsic interest but for my present purpose, as tracing my father's public career from an intimate point of view,

and prove the esteem in which he was held by many of the prominent statesmen of his day. Unfortunately, owing to the length of years that have elapsed since my father died, it has been impossible to secure, except in one instance, my father's letters to these correspondents. This exception was, however, one of importance. Through the courtesy of Mr. Duff Gordon, Sir George Cornwall Lewis's relative who now owns Harpton Court, cases of papers preserved by Sir George Cornwall Lewis and deposited in the strong room were searched, and thirty of my father's letters, some of great length, written by my father to him, were found, and these Mr. Duff Gordon has most kindly given me. These, and more than forty of Sir George Cornwall Lewis's to my father complete the correspondence between them.

I have to acknowledge gratefully the permission given me to publish two kindly complimentary notes written by Prince Albert to my father, also permission to quote letters written by the third Earl of Radnor, the third Earl of Clarendon, the Rt. Hon. Charles Villiers, the Rt. Hon. Sir George Cornwall Lewis, Mr. Richard Cobden, Mr. John Bright, and Sir Bartle Frere, Bt.

I should feel remiss did I not express my warm gratitude to two friends who have helped me considerably in writing these pages—Miss Florence Upfield Green, who with devoted friendship and very uncommon intelligence has given me secretarial help of the utmost value to me, also to my friend Colonel W. D. Thomson, C.M.G., a lover of history, who has given me valuable notes on questions which were debated in Parliament.

I have included in these pages those from the "Life of Walter Bagehot" which refer to my father, as they find a more appropriate place in a work ostensibly devoted to him. Not foreseeing at the time I wrote Bagehot's Life the possibility of my venturing to make the attempt I have now made, I recorded circumstances which related to my father during the last three years of

PREFACE

his life, after Bagehot became intimately connected with it.

I have also quoted several passages from Charles Greville's Journals, as they give an intimate flavour to public questions in which my father was concerned.

E. I. BARRINGTON.

HERD'S HILL, 1926.

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