

PART I. POLITICAL & EDUCATIONAL

SPEECHES AND WRITINGS
OF
DR. (SIR) S. SUBRAMANIA IYER

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

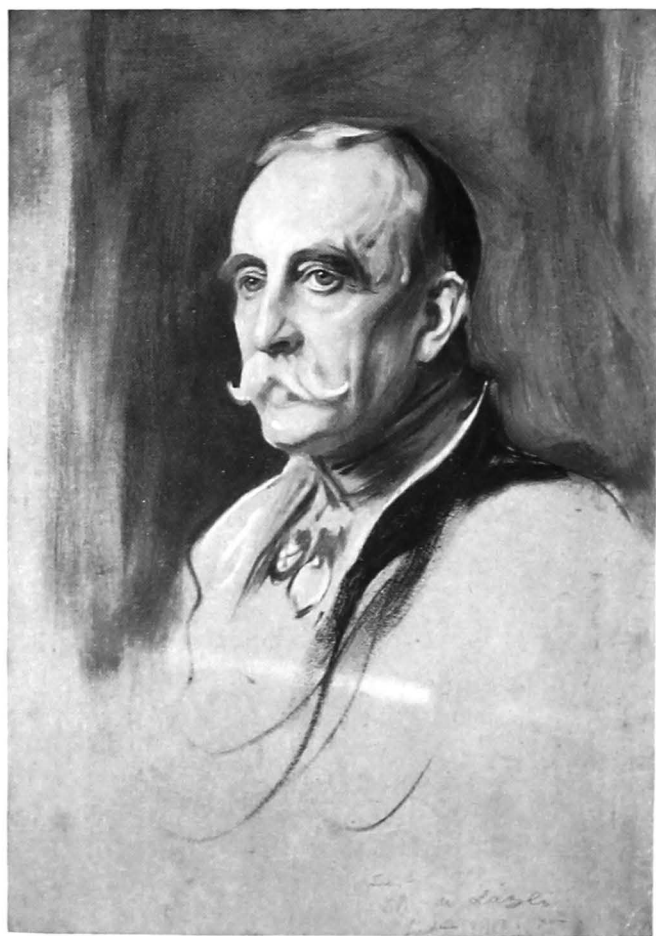
BY

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GILBERT JOHN, 4TH EARL OF MINTO, K.G., P.C., G.C.S.L., ETC.
(From a sketch by P. A. Laszlo, 1912)

LORD MINTO

A MEMOIR

BY

JOHN BUCHAN

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PREFACE

IN writing this Memoir I have had access to the journal and the private papers of Lord Minto, as well as to the official records of his administration in India and Canada, and I have had the further advantage of talks and consultations with many of his friends. To these I would offer my sincere thanks, and I would gratefully acknowledge the kindness of Lady Hutton, who lent me some of the papers of her husband, the late Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton, and the generosity of the executors of the late Lord Morley and Messrs. Macmillan & Co., who have permitted me to quote extracts from Lord Morley's letters, both published and unpublished.

The book owes a special debt to two collaborators. It was undertaken at the request of Lady Minto, who has given me such constant and invaluable help that in a real sense the book is her own. She not only arranged and analysed for me a formidable mass of documents, but from her intimate association with her husband's work she was able to cast light on many obscure matters, and to reproduce for me the atmosphere of events, which cannot be recovered from the written or printed page. I have had, too, the use of her delightful Indian diary, which I wish could be given intact to the world, for in light and colour those words of an eye-witness are far superior to any chronicle at second hand.

The other is the late Arthur Elliot. He was my friend for many years, and only those who had the privilege of knowing that wise and gracious character can realize how

PREFACE

much better this book would have been if he had lived to give it his kindly criticism. Throughout their lives the two brothers shared each other's full confidence. Minto's letters to him are the most revealing in the correspondence, and from him I received most of the material for the early chapters. My hope is that the Memoir in its final form may be such as he would have approved.

J. B.

ELSFIELD MANOR,
OXON.

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INTRODUCTORY

THE BORDER ELLIOTS

THE Scottish Borderland in its widest sense embraces the country from the Ken to Berwick, and from the Solway and the Cheviots to the backbone of mountain which runs from Merrick to the Lammermoors and cradles all the streams of the Lowlands. In that broad region the Britons of Strathclyde, the Northmen from the sea, and the later immigrants have so mixed their blood as to produce a certain uniformity of type, akin to and yet something different from other Lowland stocks. The history of each valley has been the same tale of poor soil, inclement seasons, stunted cattle and niggardly crops, a hard life varied by constant bickering among neighbours and raids into England; these valleys lay, too, in the track of the marching armies, whenever there was war between Stuart and Plantagenet and Tudor, and, save for the religious houses and the stone castles of the nobles, there could be few enduring marks of human occupation. It was a gipsy land, where life could not settle on its lees, since any night the thatch might be flaring to heaven, and the plenishing of a farm moving southward under the prick of the raiders' spears. There the hand must keep the head, and a tough, watchful race was the consequence, hardy as the black cattle of their hills, tenacious of a certain rude honour, loyal to their leaders, staunch friends, and most patient and pestilent foes. Rough as the life was, it had its codes and graces. The Borderer was quarrelsome, but he was also merciful, and was curiously averse to the shedding of blood. He was hospitable to a fault, scrupulously faithful to his word, and in giving and taking hard knocks preserved a certain

humour and mirthfulness. "The men are lyght of harte," wrote Bartholemew the Englishman in the thirteenth century, "fiers and couragious on theyre enemies." And Bishop Lesley, writing in the sixteenth century, noted that they were skilful musicians and "lovers of eloquence and poetry." Mr. Andrew Boorde, an English physician, who visited them about that date, bore witness to the same qualities, and had little fault to find except with "their develysh dysposicion not to love nor favour an Englyshman," their extreme clannishness, and their boastful pride of race. "Many," he wrote, "wyll make strong lyes." Among their green glens harpers and violers wove some of the loveliest of Scottish airs, and the gift of imagination had other issue than mere vaunting, since it gave birth to the noblest ballads that ever graced a literature.

Of the Borderland in the wider sense the Marches were the heart and citadel, and no part was in more constant unsettlement than that western area from the upper waters of Liddel to the Solway. There dwelt the Armstrongs and the Elliots, and lesser septs like the Nixons and the Croziers. It is hard to take the view of the old pedigree-makers that the Elliots as a clan were transplanted bodily from the village of Alyth, in Forfarshire, by the first Earl of Angus, when the Douglas interest became powerful on the Border. For this view historical and philological proofs are alike wanting, and it is more probable that the Ellwalds, Elwoods, or Ellets were of the same race as the other septs of Liddesdale, autochthonous in a true sense, deriving their descent from some ancient admixture of the blood of Norse rovers with that of the British of Strathclyde. The earliest records show them holding the upper glens of Liddel, as the Armstrongs held its middle course.

The piety of lettered descendants—for few Scottish family histories have been so carefully written as that of the Elliots—has preserved what is known of the rude March life before the Union of the Crowns took the heart out of Border war. The Elliots of Liddesdale lived for three centuries the life of the camp. Their little massy stone towers could not be altogether destroyed, but roof-tree and thatch and wooden outbuildings were perpetually

blazing to heaven. They had occasional quarrels with Scots neighbours, and standing feuds with Musgraves and Fenwicks and Grahams across the English line. Sometimes they were bridled by the Scottish Warden of the Marches and their warlike ardour made to serve the national cause, but more often it was a war of kites and crows, wild rides on moonlit nights, desperate affrays in moorland hollows, the "hot-trod" down Tyne or Tees when men died for a half-dozen lean cattle. The name of Liddesdale was feared as far as Yorkshire; it is recorded that in the year 1541 the English Warden tried to induce reprisals, but Tynedale and Redesdale "refused to commit slaughter of any of the notable surnames of Liddesdale for fear of deadly feud," and preferred to harry their less dangerous neighbours of Teviotside. Sometimes the Church took a hand, and the Archbishop of Glasgow was prompted by Cardinal Wolsey to lay on the Borderers a most terrible curse, concluding with "I condemn them perpetually to the deep pit of hell to remain with Lucifer and all his fellows, and their bodies to the gallows on the Burrow Mure, first to be hangit, syne revin and ruggit with dogs, swine, and other wild beasts abominable to all the world." But to hang an Elliot you had first to catch him—no easy matter, and for the empty thunder of the Church he and his kind cared not a straw. As for the Douglas lords of Liddesdale, they could threaten, and occasionally hang, but they could not restrain. "Dark Elliot's Border spear" might be kept at home for a little by burdensome bonds and hostages, but presently would come a harvest moon and it would be taken down again from the thatch. Hangings and hornings availed little, and it was to do justice on the Elliots that Bothwell marched into Liddesdale in 1556, whereby he nearly lost his life and brought Queen Mary galloping through the mosses from Jedburgh to Hermitage. Let it be said to their credit that they were stubbornly national, and rarely paltered with the English enemy. Hence their long friendship with the "rough clan" of Buccleuch, who were of the same way of thinking.

This wild life of the Marches ended early in the seventeenth century, when the governments of Scotland and England combined to crush the lawless clans. The process

which James V. had begun with the hanging of Johnnie Armstrong was carried to an effective conclusion. In Stevenson's words "the rusty blunderbuss of Scots criminal justice, which usually hurt nobody but jurymen, became a weapon of precision for the Nicksons, the Ellwalds, and the Croziers."¹ The lairds were compelled to give security for good behaviour, the old merry days of hunting in the Cheviots and raiding Northumberland were over, and, since their occupation was gone, poverty closed in on them. Men drifted to other parts of Scotland or went abroad to the wars; in the sixteenth century the Elliots had been able to muster 450 mounted men, which meant a clan numbering at least 1500; by the middle of the eighteenth century the latter figure represented the total population of Liddesdale. Soon, as Nicol Burne the Violer sang, "many a place stood in hard case where blithe folk kent nae sorrow," and Scot of Satchels in the seventeenth century thus deplored in his rough doggerel the Elliot fortunes:—

"For the Elliots, brave and worthy men,
Have been as much oppressed as any name I ken,
For in my own time I have known so much odds,
No Elliot enjoyed any heritage but Dunlibyre, Fanash, and Stobs."

It is with the last-named remaining heritage that we are now concerned. As Mangerton had the headship of the Armstrongs, so the chief of the Elliots was the laird of Redheugh, which stood near the foot of the Hermitage Water. But as time went on the Redheugh family became more identified with the peel of Lariston, higher up the Liddel valley. Stobs, across the hills on the Slitrig Water, a tributary of Teviot, became an Elliot property in 1580, and in the second decade of the seventeenth century passed into the hands of one Gilbert Elliot, a cadet of Lariston, whose mother was a Scott of Buccleuch. This Gilbert, known as "Gibbie wi' the Gowden Garters," married another Scott, the "Flower of Yarrow," a daughter of "Auld Wat of Harden," and, judging from his place in ballad literature, must have been of a character to impress the imagination of the countryside. Of the Stobs family several represented the county of Roxburgh in

¹ *Weir of Hermiston.*

Parliament, both before and after the Union, and from it sprung the famous soldier, Lord Heathfield, the defender of Gibraltar; but we must turn aside from its main line and follow that of Gilbert's fourth son, Gavin of Midlem Mill, who by his marriage with Margaret Hay of the ancient Tweeddale house of Haystoun was the father of two sons, Robert and Gilbert. This latter was the first Elliot of Minto.

Born the younger son of a younger son, Gilbert had to carve out his own career. Though barely three generations removed from the moss-troopers, he possessed that compound of worldly sagacity and religion, that ability both to watch and to pray, which is characteristic of one Scottish type. He began as a writer (*Anglice* solicitor) in Edinburgh, and in the strife of Covenant and Crown took the side of the former. A mission to London to save the life of the well-known minister, William Veitch, brought him under the notice of the leaders of the Opposition, and presently he was mixed up in the affairs of Argyll, and joined the group which included Baillie of Jerviswood, Hume of Polwarth, and William Carstares. In January 1685 he was compelled to fly the land, and returned from Holland in May with Argyll and his friends to start the futile rising which brought its leader's head to the block. There was some of the old riding blood left in the Whig lawyer, for Gilbert Elliot was with Sir John Cochran in the skirmish at Muirdykes, and gave a good account of himself. Thereafter he led a hunted life, though by some accident his name was omitted from the Government proclamation. Presently he left the country, and in his absence was sentenced to death and forfeiture, which sentence was remitted in 1687 in consideration of the earlier services of his father to the Royalist cause. He returned to Edinburgh, was admitted as an advocate to the higher branch of his profession, and when the Revolution brought his friends into power advanced swiftly at the Bar. Knighted in 1692, a baronet in 1700, and member of Parliament for the county of Roxburgh in 1703, he was now of a fortune to entitle him to purchase an estate, and in this last year he bought the lands of Minto. Two years later he went to the bench under the title of Lord Minto, becoming a judge of the very court

which twenty years before had condemned him to death. He died in 1718 at the age of sixty-seven, having won out of the disorders of the Revolution a modest fortune and estate. His portrait shows a long, heavy-jowled, mellow face, with humorous and sagacious eyes. He was the essential moderate, who managed to steer a middle course even in the stormy waters of the Union controversy, but who, when occasion required, could show himself a devoted friend and imperil his career in a doomed cause. Wodrow describes him as a man of "unshaken probity, integrity, and boldness against all unrighteousness and vice"—a tribute which showed how far the race had advanced in decorum since the ancient days of Lariston.

His eldest son, Gilbert, the second baronet, sat like his father for Roxburgh, like him and under the same title became a Lord of Session, and for forty years adorned the Scots bench, becoming eventually Lord Justice Clerk in succession to Erskine of Tinewald. There is scarcely an incident which stands out in his placid life except that he was visited by Prince Charlie's army on its march to Derby, and had to take refuge in Minto Craigs. But he created the bones of the house as we know it to-day, laid the foundations of the fine library, planted the avenues, made the pond, and turned the glen from a wilderness into a pleasance. With his son, the third Sir Gilbert, the family embarked on the tides of British politics. Brought up at the colleges of Edinburgh and Leyden, he married the heiress of the Melgund lands in Forfar and the Kynnymond property in Fife, and, partly owing to his friendship with Charles Townshend (who had married Lady Dalkeith), abandoned a promising career at the Scots Bar for London and Parliament. In him the astuteness of his grandfather and his power of steering a middle course were abnormally developed. He held various Government posts—Lordships of the Admiralty and Treasury and such-like—and would have undoubtedly gone farther but for his nationality, for he was a good man of business and a brilliant debater. But he managed to remain in office, like a permanent civil servant, when Ministers fell, for he conciliated antagonisms and united oppositions; a close friend of Bute, he was also a follower of the elder Pitt; professing himself a consistent Whig, he became one

of the most noted of the "King's Friends," and was a vigorous opponent of the Americans. A temper so supple and accommodating is not the soil in which to look for a sturdy growth of principles; but his friends, who were numerous and devoted, believed that he was always prepared "to take a stand on the supreme authority of Parliament."

His eldest son, Gilbert the fourth, was destined during the sixty-three years of his life to convert the title of the old "paper-lords" of Minto into a lordship of Parliament and an earldom. In his generation of Elliots there was not only a high level of talent, but a strain of something fantastic and adventurous. The third son, Alexander, was the friend and agent in India of Warren Hastings, who erected a monument to him on his early death. The second, Hugh, was one of the most brilliant of British diplomatists in a brilliant age; a creature of strange moods and impulses, who as a boy fought with the Russians against the Turks, called out his man in a duel, held his own with Frederick the Great, and was the author of *bons mots* at which all Europe laughed. It was he who, when the King of Prussia commented tartly on the expression of gratitude to God which accompanied the official account of Sir Eyre Coote's victory over Hyder Ali, "*Je ne savais pas que la Providence fût de vos alliés,*" replied "*Le seul, Sire, que nous ne payons pas.*" Gilbert, the eldest son, began life with a resounding success at the English Bar, but presently entered Parliament, and, as the friend of Burke and Fox and Windham, rose high in the favour of the Whigs. He was one of the managers of the Warren Hastings trial, and took his part in that debauch of frigid rhetoric. When the Revolution broke out in France he inclined to the views of Burke, and presently was sent on various continental missions, in returning from one of which he had the good fortune to be an eye-witness of the battle of Cape St. Vincent. At forty-six he was made a peer on his return from the viceroyalty of Corsica; then followed the embassy at Vienna; and then in 1806, after having been President of the Board of Control in the "Ministry of all the Talents," the Governor-Generalship of India. There he had the difficult task of foreseeing and providing against Napoleon's Asiatic

ambitions, and his chief problems were those of external policy, the relations with Persia and Afghanistan and the great Sikh Power at Lahore. In the space of his viceroyalty he saw the menace of France disappear, and largely by his own exertions Java and the Moluccas added to the possessions of Britain. An attractive figure he seems to us, who could win and retain the affection of men so different as Burke and Nelson, and who in all the whirl of public duties found his chief refreshment in the letters of his family, in the recollection of "home-felt pleasures and gentle scenes," and in plans for beautifying his Border home. He was not fated to see Minto again, for when he returned after seven years' rule in India with an earldom and a great name, he died on the first stage of that happy northward journey of which for seven years he had dreamed.

With the second Earl and fifth Baronet the house of Minto had become established in that character which attaches as clearly to families as to individuals, though it is slower to develop. The descendants of the riding Elliots were now decorous and public-spirited citizens, Whigs who cherished a belief in the People combined with a strong conviction that only a few families were fit to govern. The old devil-may-care spirit of Lariston had revived for a moment in Hugh the ambassador, but in the first half of the nineteenth century it slumbered. The second Earl was successively ambassador to Berlin, First Lord of the Admiralty and Lord Privy Seal, and by the marriage of his daughter, Frances, to Lord John Russell, was connected with the inner counsels of his party. In the days of the Lords of Session Minto had been a plain Scots country house, and the company that visited it an occasional judge on circuit, or a vacation party of Edinburgh lawyers, with a stray historian or philosopher from the university. But the last Sir Gilbert and first Earl had widened the bounds, great men like Burke journeyed thither, and soon the house, enlarged and adorned, was one of the chain of lodgings by means of which the leaders of politics and society made their northern tours—a stage between Dalkeith and Alnwick. As in duty bound its dwellers kept touch with the latest books, music, gossip, and learned speculation; but, having

that union of far-wandering impulses with the love of home which characterizes their countrymen, they were never mere Londoners taking the rural air, but country folk, thirled to the soil, and loving every rood of it. He who would seek an account of the full and vigorous life of Border gentlefolk a hundred years ago will find it portrayed for all time in the pages of Lockhart.

The third Earl—a William and not a Gilbert—chose the *fallentis semita vite*. He sat for many years in Parliament, but never held office, and much of his time was given to the management of his estate, county business, country sports, and long periods of foreign travel. His wife's father was Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Hislop, and her mother a daughter of Hugh Elliot, so she was a distant cousin of her husband's. Never strong in body, she had the spirit of a soldier, and wherever she went radiated an atmosphere of gentleness and mirth and courage. Like many who are not robust in health, she had an insatiable zest for life, and had, perhaps from her sufferings, keener perceptions than other people, and a quicker sense of joy. Each new experience and interest was adopted with gusto, and few quiet lives have been more fully lived. The list of the books she was reading at the age of twenty-three might shame many professed scholars; but she had nothing of the blue-stocking in her, and her learning was a small thing compared to her wit, her sense of fun, her startling acumen, and her broad tolerant wisdom. She is a figure that may be commended to the acquaintance of those who, in Lady Louisa Stuart's phrase, have "an old-fashioned partiality for a gentlewoman," and one could wish that Mr. Arthur Elliot's privately printed volume of extracts from her letters and journals could be made accessible to the world. For as a letter writer she ranks with Lady Louisa. She was also an accomplished historian and biographer, as her memoir of Hugh Elliot and her four volumes on the first Lord Minto prove, and her *Border Sketches* show how deep she had drunk of the traditions of her ancestral countryside. But it is in her diaries and letters that she most reveals herself; and whether she is trying to probe the secret of some rare landscape, or discoursing gravely on politics and metaphysics—till she breaks off with a laugh, or gossiping

about manners and people, or formulating from a rich experience a mellow philosophy of life, she leaves on the reader an impression of a soul rich in the best endowments of humanity, a spirit at once sane and adventurous, securely anchored and yet reaching out delightedly to the cyclic changes of the world. If there were two strains in the Elliot blood—the venturesomeness and speed of Liddesdale, and the sagacious centrality of the Whig lairds—in her they were mixed in right proportion, and she bequeathed something of this just equipoise to her sons.

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