

A

SOME ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE AND OPINIONS
OF
CHARLES,
SECOND EARL GREY.

BY LIEUT.-GENERAL HON. C. GREY.



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P R E F A C E

THE following Memoir was written for the most part upwards of ten years ago. The Continent of Europe was then scarcely recovering from the convulsions of 1848-49. England had almost alone weathered the storm; a safety which, I think, she owed mainly to the sound principles of Government inaugurated by the Whig Ministry of 1830, and afterwards necessarily adhered to by succeeding Administrations, of whatever party denomination.

The passing of the Reform Act had indeed rendered Government on any other principles impracticable; and in this fact we find the defence and justification of that measure, as well as the object of its authors. Certainly, at all events, this was the sole object of my father as the leader of the Reform movement, to insure the future conduct of the Government

on sound and constitutional principles, not, as has been sometimes asserted, to perpetuate the tenure of office in his own party.

The present volume, however, will stop far short of the time when Reform principles achieved their final triumph; but I shall often have to allude to that time, and to the results that have followed the policy then adopted, as affording a fair subject for comparison with the period of which I am now to speak, when a widely different system of Government was still in the ascendant.

I do not propose at present to bring down the notice of my father's public life beyond 1817, when the alliance which for upwards of eleven years had subsisted between the Whigs and Grenvillites was finally dissolved; nor even as regards that period do I intend to enter into anything like a detailed or connected narrative of events, which are matter of history, and with which I shall suppose my readers to be more or less acquainted—further, that is, than may be necessary to illustrate my father's political opinions and principles of action. I shall take the expression of these opinions and principles as much as possible from his own words, either written in familiar correspondence with his family and friends, or spoken by him in his place in Parliament. My object will be—if I cannot persuade the world on all occasions, as I am

myself persuaded, of the general soundness of his views—at least to endeavour to impart somewhat of my own conviction of the singularly straightforward, disinterested, and high-minded motives which ever guided his public conduct.

I make use of the appellations ‘Whig’ and ‘Tory’ as they applied to the parties as they stood opposed to each other at the time of which I write; by no means as they are now assumed by parties and individuals who have no earthly claim to be characterized as either one or the other. In fact, since the settlement of all the great questions formerly dividing men on somewhat higher grounds than those of mere personal pretensions and individual rivalry, these names have lost all significance. From the time that the Reform Act was finally accepted by the Conservative party, and that Sir Robert Peel issued his famous Tamworth manifesto in 1834—(every word of which, my father said at the time, he might himself have written)—there has indeed been no difference between public men as to the principles on which the Government of the country should be conducted; and the retention of the old party names serves no other end, to my way of thinking, but that most mischievous one, of keeping apart those, who, differing on no one principle of national policy, might act together to the great advantage of the State, but for the accident which has