

SELECTIONS FROM CLARENDON

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Characters and Episodes
 of
 The Great Rebellion

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Selected from

*The History and Autobiography of
 Edward, Earl of Clarendon*

AND

Edited, with short Notes

BY

THE VERY REV. G. D. BOYLE, M.A.

DEAN OF SALISBURY

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INTRODUCTION.



‘TALKING of history,’ Johnson said, ‘we may know historical facts to be true, as we may know facts in common life to be true. Motives are generally unknown. We cannot trust to the characters we find in history, unless when they are drawn by those who knew the persons; as those, for instance, by Sallust and by Lord Clarendon.’ The opinion expressed in these remarkable words is undoubtedly the opinion entertained by average Englishmen for many years regarding the characters drawn by Clarendon in his great work. Indeed, it may be said that until our own times, the supremacy of Clarendon, as an historian and portrait painter, was almost undisputed. He has moulded the conceptions of several generations, and, as Ranke expresses it, ‘he belongs to those who have essentially fixed the circle of ideas for the English nation.’ The estimate which Ranke has formed as to Clarendon’s historical position will probably be accepted generally as a thoroughly trustworthy account of this great writer. With true historical insight he has shown the real bias and intention of Clarendon’s writings. He has placed him high among the leading statesmen of the seventeenth century, who have given to the world their own personal impressions, under the form of memoirs and histories. The moderation of Clarendon and the conspicuous defects of his narrative are admirably delineated. The relation of the