
English Statesmen Since the Peace of 1815

Kebbel Thomas Edward

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ENGLISH STATESMEN

SINCE THE PEACE OF 1815.

BY

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PREFACE.

I WISH it to be known that the following Sketches were not originally designed for publication in their present form, but intended only to fill an occasional column in a popular magazine. The history of them is as follows:—It was thought by the conductors of a magazine, intended especially for the working classes, that, under present circumstances, a series of short articles upon the last and present generation of English Statesmen would be not only popular, but useful. In conformity with this view, the following short “studies,” as I may call them, were written for the “People’s Magazine,” the object of them being, not so much to give biographical accounts of the various statesmen introduced, as to define the exact place which each has filled in the chain of political history, and the precise work that each contributed, in his day, to the general result now before us. It seems

that, for some reason, this method of treatment did not meet with the approval of the proprietors, who had expected, I believe, more biography and less politics than it was consistent with my plan to furnish. It was, therefore, suggested to me, that I should place them in the hands of the late Editor, to be disposed of at his own discretion. The result was an arrangement with Messrs Bemrose, by which they were to be brought out in the shape of a separate volume ; and, I have merely to add, that, although it would not have occurred to me to write "a book" upon this subject, partly because I have already travelled over a good deal of the same ground in another work, partly because an original work seems to require a *raison d'etre* of its own not always to be found in the wants of periodical literature, nevertheless, as the Sketches were in existence, I saw no reason why they should not be given to the public. They are incomplete, but I hope they are not inaccurate ; and I hope, too, their incompleteness is not of a character to defeat their primary intention.

T. E. KEBBEL.

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ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION.

AT a time when the working men of England are aspiring to make their voice heard in the government of this great empire, and when they are told almost every day that it is for them to effect a change in the policy which has directed our councils for many generations, in order that the true happiness of the people may be more effectually promoted, it may be well for them to study with some attention our more recent political history, and to ascertain for themselves what the scope of that policy really was, and to what extent it is still upheld by the governing classes of the kingdom. To this end we have thought we shall be consulting the original design of the *People's Magazine*, by giving to our readers a few brief sketches of the principal statesmen who, since the termination of the great war, have determined the action of our Government both in foreign and domestic matters. During the last twenty years so great a mass of private papers relating to the history of our chief ministers of State

have been made public, that we are now in a much better position than were our fathers to judge of their honesty and wisdom. Among political students and writers it is well known that the estimate which formerly prevailed of several distinguished men has undergone a great change during the last quarter of a century in consequence of these publications; but the popular opinion of them remains to this day pretty nearly what it was before. And one object of the present series is to explain to that class of readers to whom the more expensive periodicals and works on history and politics are comparatively inaccessible, what was the real character and creed of those men whom one party long worshipped as idols, and another execrated as fiends. More than this, while clearing our views of the particular ministers who have guided the helm of the State, we shall be able to obtain a deeper insight into the nature, the origin, and the expediency of those theories with which their names are associated. And it is needless to say that he makes but an indifferent reformer who does not thoroughly understand what it is that he is going to reform.

LORD CASTLEREAGH.

THE position of Great Britain in 1815, though externally glorious and triumphant, was, in regard to domestic affairs, replete with elements of discord. The Radical party, which the French Revolution had called into being in this country, had been silenced in presence of the common danger which threatened us in the empire of Napoleon. At all events, so overwhelming a majority of the nation had declared against it, that, if not silent, it was harmless. But with the return of peace, the revolutionary spirit again reared its head and lifted up its voice on high. It was perfectly natural that it should. With much that was exaggerated and ludicrous in the Radicalism of 1793, large elements of truth were intermingled. A great many abuses, a great many bad laws, a great deal of real misgovernment, the growth of a century of