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978-1-108-04458-5 - The Croker Papers: The Correspondence and Diaries of the Late  
Right Honourable John Wilson Croker, Secretary to the Admiralty from 1809 to 1830:  
Volume 1

Edited by Louis J. Jennings

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### The Croker Papers

John Wilson Croker (1780–1857), politician and writer, was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and studied for the bar before moving to London. He was appointed as Deputy Chief Secretary for Ireland when Sir Arthur Wellesley took command of the Army in Portugal, and subsequently became Secretary to the Admiralty, an important role in wartime. He was noted for his efficiency and honesty, and held the post until 1830, despite changes of government. He was a prolific letter-writer, on both professional and personal matters, and almost all his correspondents were men of importance in their field. This three-volume edition of his papers was published in 1884. Volume 1 covers Croker's early life and career until 1828. He had many friends, although as a harsh literary critic he also made enemies. He gives amusing anecdotes of Regency society and royalty, but suffered personal tragedy with the death of his son.

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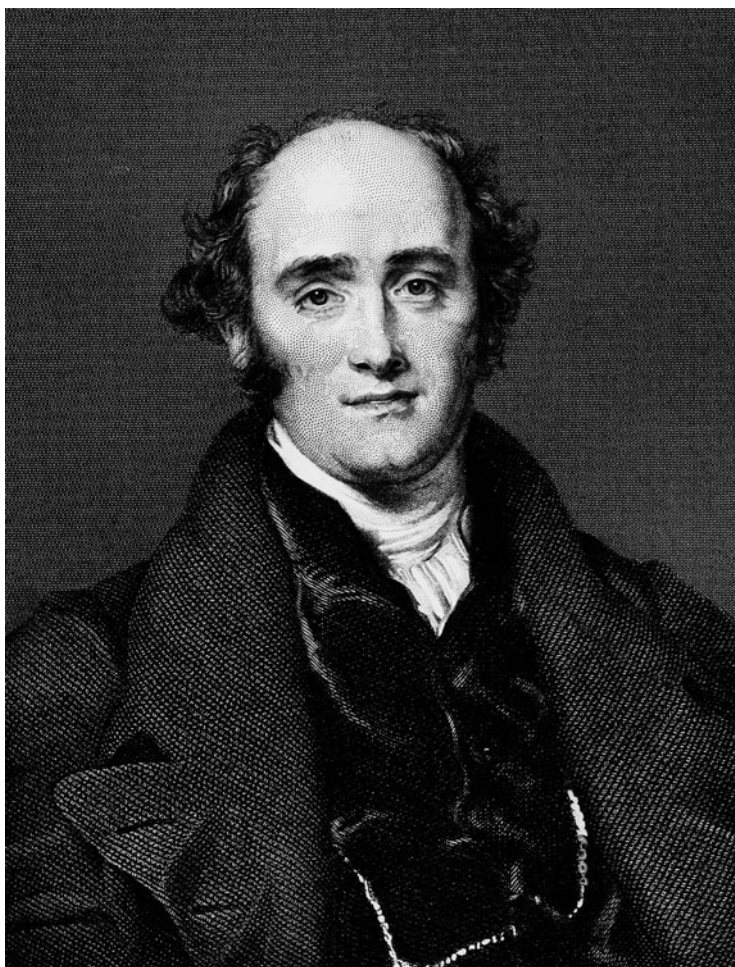
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THE

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FROM 1809 TO 1830.

EDITED BY

LOUIS J. JENNINGS,

AUTHOR OF 'REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED STATES.'

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## P R E F A C E.



A FEW words of explanation may be necessary concerning the papers which are submitted to the public in these volumes.

The letters of Mr. Croker from 1811 to about 1833 were chiefly to be found in twenty-eight large volumes; from 1833 to 1857, they were scattered in great disorder through scores of bundles of miscellaneous documents, most of which yielded nothing likely to prove attractive to the general reader. But, mingled with tax receipts, appeals for alms and loans, friendly invitations, applications for office, and formal notes on business affairs, were many letters of the highest political importance, and others of almost equal value relating to the social and literary life of the first half of the present century.

The preliminary work of reading, sorting, and making selections from this immense collection consumed the greater part of a year. In the end, I found that although there were serious gaps in the correspondence, for which Mr. Croker's Trustees are unable to account, yet that a great mass remained which could not fail to be of unusual interest to the public, and of great value to the future historian. Mr. Croker's correspondence was chiefly carried on with men of distinction in various walks of life, and it ranged over every topic which engaged popular attention. Mr. Croker's own letters were written in a singularly light and sparkling vein;

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and his friendships included most of the eminent statesmen of his day, and all who had made public life illustrious—except, of course, on the side of the Whigs. He gave his friends, when he wrote to them, the best he had to give, and they dealt in the same spirit with him. The result, after all deductions, was a correspondence which presents a contribution to the history of our times not surpassed in general interest, or in historical importance, by any similar records which have been brought to light during the present century. The curious series of incidents which preceded and attended the Ministries of Mr. Canning and Lord Goderich; the letters of Sir Robert Peel, which throw so powerful, and from some points of view, so new a light, on his entire character and career; the full details concerning the negotiations which went on within the Tory party in the critical month of May, 1832; the narrative of the circumstances attending Peel's second great conversion in 1846; the remarkable conversations with the Duke of Wellington; the statement made to Mr. Croker by George the Fourth, clearly with a view to its publication; the secret history of many political events which hitherto have been only darkly visible to the public—these are among the features of the Croker Papers which will command universal attention. And it will be found that the literary and social interest of the collection is scarcely less original and attractive.

The systematic arrangement of these papers, the process of condensation, the frequent necessity of choosing from several documents bearing upon the same subject that which seemed the most worthy of publication—all this was a most difficult and heavy task, requiring upwards of another year for its completion. My first and greatest desire from the outset was to let the correspondence speak for itself, a long and patient study of it having convinced me that it afforded a complete

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vindication of Mr. Croker from the injustice with which one writer after another, each imitating the other, had treated him. It is too often the first word that decides the estimation in which a man is to be held. It happened that Mr. Disraeli, inflamed by personal dislike and pique, spoke that word about Mr. Croker, and others echoed it, some of them from Mr. Disraeli's motive, and others without well knowing what they were doing.

But although it seemed clear that the correspondence should be allowed to tell its own tale, a connecting narrative was indispensable. In endeavouring to supply this, I have presented the main facts connected with Mr. Croker's life, together with such explanatory comments as appeared to be essential in reference to the public events which are directly mentioned in the correspondence. To have gone beyond these limits would have led to the attempt to construct a long and formal biography of Mr. Croker, for which there is not adequate material; or to write the political history of this country from 1809 to 1857—an undertaking which would have been still more remote from the scope of the editor's duties.

The narrative portions of these volumes are therefore brief, as brief as they could properly be made; for it seemed to be a most important part of the business of an editor to interpose as little as possible between the reader and Mr. Croker or his correspondents. The editor is aware that his own work may, in consequence, have a slight and fragmentary appearance, but this was inevitable, since it was designed to form a mere link of connection—unobtrusive, but not, it is to be hoped, superfluous.

It would be too much to hope that no error whatever will be found in a compilation which deals with so many hundreds of names and dates and personal allusions; but if any mistakes

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have thus far escaped detection, it may honestly be pleaded that it is not because the most anxious care and attention have not been bestowed upon the work throughout every stage of its preparation. Finally, the editor is desirous of acknowledging with gratitude the great assistance he has received from Mr. Murray and from Mr. John Murray, jun., in the laborious task of reading the proofs, and in suggesting appropriate and necessary notes. These notes are placed within brackets when they refer to the diaries or letters, but the brackets are omitted when the editor has appended them to his own remarks. The very few notes furnished by Mr. Croker himself have his initials attached to them.

*October 1884.*



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