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978-1-108-04460-8 - The Croker Papers: The Correspondence and Diaries of the Late Right Honourable John Wilson Croker, Secretary to the Admiralty from 1809 to 1830: Volume 3

Edited by Louis J. Jennings

Excerpt

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LETTERS, DIARIES, AND MEMOIRS
OF THE
RT. HON. JOHN W. CROKER.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1843–1844.

Mr. Croker's Acquaintance with Samuel Wilberforce—Article on "Rubrics and Ritual"—Dr. Wilberforce on the Tractarians—His Review of certain Episcopal Charges—Bishop Phillpott's Remarks on Newman and Pusey—Mr. Henry Drummond on Jewish and Modern Ecclesiastical Architecture—The "Young England" Party—Mr. Croker's reference to it in the *Quarterly Review*—Lockhart's description of the Leaders—Sir James Graham's Opinion—"Disraeli alone is Mischievous"—Sir Robert Peel's Sketch of the Political Situation—"The times are out of Joint"—Mr. Lockhart on Alison's History—Lord Brougham and the Corn Law League—Criticism of Jesse's Life of Selwyn—Letter from the Duke of Rutland—Lord Ashburton's Advice to Peel to "Nail his Colours to the Mast"—Peel's Reply—Letter from Sir Peter Laurie—Carlyle on "Cromwellian Confusion"—Disturbed State of Ireland—Prosecution of O'Connell—Subsequent Proceedings in the House of Lords—The Reversal of O'Connell's Conviction—Mr. Croker's Letters to the King of Hanover—His Opinion of Railroads.

ONE of Mr. Croker's most frequent correspondents at this period was Archdeacon (afterwards Bishop) Wilberforce, who had been rector of Alverstoke, where Mr. Croker had a house. Their communications related to a variety of subjects, but

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generally they were upon questions concerning the Church, in which Mr. Croker always took a profound interest. In May, 1843, he wrote for the *Quarterly Review* a long article on "Rubrics and Ritual," in which the Tractarian movement was incidentally discussed. This article was carefully revised before its publication by the Archdeacon, and soon afterwards—in April, 1843—he wrote to Mr. Croker about a difficulty in which his younger brother had become involved. "It is," he said, "a long and to me a sad story. It is, however, greatly exaggerated, foolish and wrong as entailing evil, as I think the act was. In one word, the thing he did was this: a sick man, whom he had visited for months, and of whose state he was satisfied fully, sent for him in the delirium preceding death. Thinking the man past the voice of reading a prayer, he took a *Cross*, and bade him fix his dying thoughts on Him who hung upon it. Taken alone this might have inflamed a parish, but coming as it did, as one of many equivocal acts, it stirred up a perfect conflagration. However, my brother (my youngest brother) is more tolerant of such ineptiæ than I can be in so serious a subject matter: and the curate, being a very good and a very zealous man, he as far as possible defends him." In another letter he referred to the wish of the Tractarians to "sweep the church clear of all pews and seats, save the stone seat round the walls for the cripples and infirm." He continued: "There is a lunatic at Haslar, perfectly harmless (I believe, the cook) but obliged to be shut up because he has that peculiar sensitiveness about the honours due to the Virgin Mary that he would kill any one who speaks disparagingly of her. I think this would well illustrate, in one of your well-turned sentences, the growing Mariolatry of the Tract Doctors." In the same month of April he briefly reviews several episcopal charges which had recently been delivered, and remarks that the

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“Bishop of Worcester’s was *essentially* un-Church, but it seemed to me from absolute ignorance of his subject, with a very high degree of general ignorance; well flanked by a remarkable unacquaintance with the written vernacular.”

The following is the conclusion of the letter:—

But the charge of my excellent cousin, the Bishop of Chester was of another stamp, and seemed to be, from the thorough ingraining of Puritanism, essentially at variance with every principle of our Church. I do not remember to have heard from any competent and unbiassed judge, two opinions as to its essential error as well as its mischievous violence. In his first edition he singles out Gladstone’s statements for dogmatic censure: in his second these are in great measure withdrawn, and a quotation from the ‘Tracts for the Times’ is substituted. This quotation receives the full vials of his wrath, as embodying a dangerous heresy; but upon examination it appears that the passage is a quotation from one of the most universally approved and best-considered dogmatic treatises of his Lordship’s greatest predecessor, Bishop Pearson. It is this sort of violence which gives their real strength to the *Tract Leaders*, and which, carried out into detail in the administration of his diocese, is making it next to impossible “to gather in ‘*these* the harvest of food’ which they have prepared for us.” I was very glad to hear you thus express yourself, as I am convinced that it is indeed our wisdom. By the way, my admirable brother here strikes me as a remarkable exception to your rule as to those who go all lengths with N. [Newman] and P. [Pusey]. There is not a touch of insanity in its remotest development upon him, and yet—he is an *amiable* man.

I trust that Sir Robert will not yield an inch to this Dissenting clamour as to his Education Bill. It seems to me the very crisis of the moral power of his government, and deeply anxious as I am for its stability and renown *hereafter*, I watch every step with the keenest anxiety. I am afraid that Sir Jas. G. [Graham], at least, does not estimate the relative strength of Dissenters and the Church aright. The weakness of the Church a few years since, and the marvellous change which has come over the mind of England, have so entirely altered the position of all questions with which they are connected, that a man formed to official life in the old groove, can

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hardly be prepared for the present state of things. Do you think that he has realized the fact that, out of the 16 or 17 millions of our population, the conduct of Government on this question will cordially attach to them some 12 or 13 millions, if it stands by the Church; whilst no concessions will do anything *really* to attach the 4 millions besides, who feel in their inner hearts that they are severed in truth from our politics by a gulf which no concession or assimilation can bridge over. This at least is my conviction; and I wish that *your* powerful influence would suggest it to Sir R. Peel.

The Bishop of Exeter (Dr. Phillpotts) to Mr. Croker.

Bishopstowe, May 2nd, 1843.

MY DEAR SIR,

1. I differ from you in what you say is the general result of your opinion, that *whatever is, is right* in respect to Ecclesiastical rituals, &c.

I go thus far with you, that, considering all things—especially that the Church has not been permitted to legislate, nor to deliberate for itself, for 120 years, nor in calmness and sobriety for 40 years more—it is marvellous that things are so well as they are.

2. You differ from me about Convocation *less*, probably, than you suspect. I wish it to sit again, only for the purpose of synodically devising a better Synod than itself; one, more like Synods of the early Church—in *one* house, with less of *power* to Presbyters—but more of means of counsel and aid from them to the bishops than their separate House gives. I need not tell *you* that Convocation is not the ancient Synod of our own Church.

We need—and *must have*—a legislative body, sitting for real business from time to time. It ought to consist of bishops either solely (in the presence of Presbyters who should have a right, not to debate with them, but, hearing what they discuss, to represent by writing their opinions, when they think it necessary) or of bishops and such divines and representatives of the clergy, as shall be found necessary, securing a real preponderance to the bishops.

I write—not without having previously thought on this matter—but without ever drawing out my thoughts on paper,

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NEWMAN AND PUSEY.

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and, therefore, securing a full right to change my opinion on conviction.

But I am confident, that it is hardly possible for us to go on long without restoring to the Church a real church legislation. If you were a bishop, you would feel the necessity as strongly as I do, for you would not be content to let things slip smoothly and gently down, without an attempt to keep up the fabric committed to your charge. You would strive to restore what we have lost—and very much have we lost—as well as to preserve what we still hold.

Of the *Rubrics*, I think very few are really obscure, still fewer impracticable. I am favourable to the restoration of obedience to them, though perhaps I agree with you in not thinking very judicious the manner in which this was dealt with in the charge you refer to. There is not perhaps enough needing amendment in the *Rubrics*, of itself, to require a Synod.

But of the *Canons*, this cannot be said. Many of them are indeed impracticable, and therefore not only these, but many that are practicable, have fallen into desuetude. There are few which are fitted to the present state of things. They must be altered if the Church is to last in England, under the pressure of all that is opposed to it in the privileges (supposed or real) of Dissenters—and with the little of real power of restraint over its own members, even its clergy, which it at present has.

That there are not incalculably wider departures from what is right in the state of our Church, is a most astonishing testimony to the faithfulness of the clergy.

3. I give up *Newman and No. 90* fully.

For *Pusey* (the most guileless of men, the most disinterested, the most truly evangelical) I feel too warmly to give him up, much as I think in him to be not right.

Of the *effects* of the tracts—and of that movement—my opinion is what it was. I rejoice in heart, and am humbly thankful to God, for what I see of the young clergy—whose feeling and views are, almost without exception, in some degree influenced by that movement. It is true, that only little has fallen under my eye, as Bishop, of the foolish extravagances, which I have heard of elsewhere.

I write immediately on the receipt of your letter, and in the midst of much occupation.

If, after what I have written, you still think I can be of use to you, command me.

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If I find you quite disengaged, I will, with your leave, run down some day to Molesey. If it should happen that you let me in when the Solicitor-General* is with you, I shall the more rejoice: for [of] him I think more highly—as of a man of a right mind, as well of as of rare ability—than of any one else of our public men. I heartily wish that he were taken from that profession in which he has no rival, and, with an independent fortune, placing him out of any occasion for the emoluments of office, fixed permanently among statesmen among whom he soon would have no equal.

Yours, my dear Sir,

Always with real regard, most faithfully,

H. EXETER.

Mr. Henry Drummond to Mr. Croker.

[Without date.]

MY DEAR CROKER,

You seem to forget that a wise man can ask more questions in a minute than a fool can answer in a year, but *Je ferai mon impossible* to please you.

You will remember that the Tabernacle was built east and west, so that when the sun rose in the east, it, shining in at the eastern door, illuminated through it the whole Holy, and Holy of Holies. The Temple of Solomon was built on the same plans, and the other temples by him at Baalbec and Palmyra are north and south, though the entrance is at the west to the Atrium. The Christian churches were built with the altar to the east for the reasons stated in a tract which I enclose. The Pagans could only imitate the revealed worship whether Jewish or Christian, because the creature never could imagine *how* the Creator should be worshipped. The worship of Pagans consisted only of the sacrifices of beasts, because that only could they *see* in the Tabernacle; they never could know nor understand the things of the Holy, such as the candlestick, the golden altar of incense, and the table of shewbread, and had nothing whatever analogous. The Portico was always called the front; even where there was no entrance except at a side. No doubt the earliest Heathen

* [Sir William Follett.]

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temples were mere copies of Solomon's, as Wilkins has shown in the preface to 'Magna Græcia,'* and would therefore, wherever attention was paid to the points of the compass, stand the same way; but then, as now with Pugin, who writes an elaborate article in the *Dublin Review* to show that churches should have the altar at the east, and then forthwith builds the cathedral at Southwark and places it at the west, so the ancients did not always stand to their own principles even if they knew them. The heathen knew nothing of worship: they only knew the preparation for it, which is sacrifice. I wish you would come here some day and talk this matter over: I can send for you to the station at Woking, and you are sure to find us, for my poor boy is so ill that we cannot leave him, and shall not so long as he is spared to us.

Always yours faithfully,

HENRY DRUMMOND.

The "Young England" party, under the leadership of Disraeli and Smythe (afterwards Lord Strangford), was now beginning to attract the attention of the country. Mr. Croker made a slight, and not unkindly, reference to it in a footnote to one of his political articles. It consisted, he said, of "four or five young gentlemen who are known, it seems, by the designation of *Young England*. Their number is so small, their views so vague, and their influence so slight, that it may seem superfluous to allude to them, but our respect for the personal character of those amongst them of whom we have any knowledge—our favourable opinion of their talents though rather, it must be confessed, of a *belles-lettres*, than a statesmanlike character—and a strong sympathy with many of their feelings—induce us to express our surprise and regret that they should not see, even with their own peculiar views, the extreme inconsistency and impolicy of endeavouring to create distrust of the only statesman in whom the great

* ['The Antiquities of Magna Græcia,' by William Wilkins, Architect to the H.E.I.C. Cambridge, 1807.]

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Conservative body has any confidence, or can have any hope. We make all due allowance for 'young ambition,' even when it neglects Shakespeare's wise advice, of beginning with a little diffidence; but we can still find no sufficient justification for the conduct which these gentlemen have recently adopted—particularly for their support of Mr. Smith O'Brien's motion—the most offensive to *Old England* which has been made for many years. We beg leave, in all kindness, to warn them against being deceived as to the quality of the notice which their singularity has obtained; it has in it more of wonder than of respect, and will certainly confer on them no permanent consideration with any party or any constituency: a few stray and unexpected shots, fired in the rear of an army, attract more notice than a cannonade in front; but it is an evanescent surprise, soon forgotten, or remembered only to the disadvantage of those whose indiscretion created it."

There is no letter of Mr. Croker's to be found in reference to the "Young Englanders," but he appears to have written to Mr. Lockhart to make some enquiries.

Mr. Lockhart to Mr. Croker.

DEAR CROKER,

P. Borthwick was a notorious man in the Scotch newspapers of 1822.

B. Disraeli published his 'Vivian Grey'—the only work that has been at all successful—eighteen years ago I am sure. He must be forty or close to that.*

You omit G. Smythe, Lord Strangford's son—very young—the cleverest of the set I believe.

Cochrane † is, I suppose, twenty-five or thirty. Son of Sir Thos.—grandson of the Honourable Sir Alexander the Admiral. Mr. C. has a good estate in Scotland through his mother.

* [Mr. Disraeli was at the time thirty-eight. The first volumes of 'Vivian Grey' were published in 1826.]

† [The present Lord Lamington.]

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“YOUNG ENGLAND.”

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I don't know that Borthwick ever published poetry, but he was a tragic actor at the minor theatres for some years.

Nor do I know that G. Smythe has published verse, though it is likely he has in the annuals.

Milnes, Disraeli, Cochrane, are poets. Cochrane not the worst of the three. He is a Cochrane . . . but not a bad fellow. A little *notice* would have made him and Smythe all right. Disraeli and Borthwick are very necessitous, and wanted places of course.

I fancy Young England has in some degree at least associated itself with *Urquhart*.

Ever yours,

J. G. L.

Sir James Graham to Mr. Croker.

Whitehall, August 22nd, 1843.

With respect to Young England, the puppets are moved by D'Israeli, who is the ablest man among them: I consider him unprincipled and disappointed; and in despair he has tried the effect of bullying. I think with you, that they will return to the *crib* after prancing, capering, and snorting; but a crack or two of the whip well applied may hasten and ensure their return. D'Israeli alone is mischievous; and with him I have no desire to keep terms. It would be better for the party, if he were driven into the ranks of our open enemies.

Very truly yours,

JAMES GRAHAM.

The general demoralization of politics, and the great discontent which prevailed among the working classes, gave the members of the new party many an opportunity of distinguishing themselves. They went to Manchester (in 1844) and attended meetings of the operatives, and Mr. Disraeli showed how strongly he held the opinions which he afterwards developed in 'Sybil, or the New Nation,' as the book was at first called, the sub-title being afterwards changed to 'The Two Nations.' He had not yet denounced the Conservative

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THE CROKER PAPERS. [CHAP. XXIII.]

party as an "organised hypocrisy," or begun his fierce attacks upon Sir Robert Peel. In Peel's letters to Mr. Croker, there is not a single allusion at any time to Mr. Disraeli, nor does Mr. Croker ever mention him till towards the close of his life, as will be seen in a later chapter. That Peel, in 1843, felt the pressure of the difficulties which surrounded him is obvious from his own rapid sketch of the situation.

Sir Robert Peel to Mr. Croker. Extract.

Whitehall (Sunday Night), [April (?)] 1843.

MY DEAR CROKER,

The times are out of joint, and this makes party out of joint.

Four years of successive unfavourable harvests, affected trade injuriously; five years of deficient revenue affected finance injuriously.

There is a schism in the Scotch Church—a schism in the Church here. Puseyism has alienated the Wesleyans, and redoubled the hostile activity against the Church, of other Dissenters, and made many sober and attached friends of the Church lukewarm in its defence. To govern Ireland by means of an exclusive Protestant party is impossible. The attempt to govern it impartially—after it has been so long governed through one party and the other—forfeits the confidence of both.

The attempt to revive trade by lowering the cost of subsistence, and to provide a remedy for such a state of things as that which left us with 14 or 15,000 persons in one town, during the last winter, without the means of providing food by labour, and yet at the same time to do this cautiously and with due regard to the interests of agriculture, is what is called a half-measure. The agriculturists forget the danger to which hunger and want exposed property a few months since, and resent the fall of price which averted it.

Commerce, inflated by extravagant speculation and the issues of joint-stock banks, and really suffering by the competition of other countries, demands some remedy or other from the hands of the Government.