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Frontmatter
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Memoirs of John Horne Tooke

Equally revered and reviled, the radical John Horne Tooke (1736–1812) enjoyed a well-deserved reputation as a political firebrand. Having attended Eton and St John's College, Cambridge, he explored careers in the church and law before finally gaining recognition as a vehement advocate of political reform. This acclaimed two-volume biography by Alexander Stephens (1757–1821) was published in 1813, incorporating personal correspondence and presenting its subject as 'a firm friend to the laws and liberties of his native country.' Volume 1 covers the period 1736–77 and leads the reader from Horne's birth, education and ordination through to his early defence of John Wilkes and the foundation of the Society of Gentleman Supporters of the Bill of Rights. During this period, Horne published *The Petition of an Englishman* (1765) as well as stinging letters in the *Oxford Magazine*. This volume concludes with an account of Horne's infamous trial and imprisonment for libel.

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Alexander Stephens

Frontmatter

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Interspersed with Original Documents

VOLUME 1

ALEXANDER STEPHENS



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[More information](#)

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MEMOIRS
OF
JOHN HORNE TOOKE,
INTERSPERSED WITH
ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS.

BY ALEXANDER STEPHENS, ESQ.
OF THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

— “ Nam divitiarum et formæ gloria fluxa
Atque fragilis est: virtus clara
Æternaque habetur.”

SALL. BEL. CATALINAR. cap. 1.

LONDON:
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Alexander Stephens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Poppin's Court, Fleet Street.**

TO THE

EARL OF MOIRA, K. G.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA,

&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

I dedicate this work to you, merely because I know not of any other public man so worthy of my esteem.

Had your lordship, in conformity with the general wish, been occupied at this moment in directing the councils of that country, which your life, character, and talents have adorned, this address would have been withheld; for it might then have appeared to spring from the sordid calculations of interest, or the still meaner suggestions of adulation.

It is now only, when you are hastening, I trust, to confer blessings on millions,

iv

DEDICATION.

and about to vindicate the honour of the
British name in the East, that I presume
to inscribe this work to you, and beg
leave to acknowledge myself,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient

and very humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.



TO write the life of a person, against whom violent prejudices have long existed, and treat freely of one, as yet scarcely cold in his grave, is a task equally difficult and delicate. Yet memoirs, such as these, if composed with talents and fidelity, would contribute to rescue English biography from the charge of penury and partiality, on one hand, while, by laying open the secret springs of human action, on the other, they could not fail both to gratify and instruct mankind.

But if, unfortunately, the author does not possess such high pretensions to public attention, he, at least, hopes to be entitled to the humbler claims of candour and ingenuousness. It is his chief aim, on the present occasion, to rescue the name and character of a celebrated man from unmerited obloquy, and prove, not-

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Alexander Stephens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

P R E F A C E.

withstanding some apparent political eccentricities, that he was a true, able, and firm friend to the laws and liberties of his native country. But it is not intended to describe him as a “faultless monster,” entirely exempt from all the passions, the frailties, and the failings, incident to humanity. He has not drawn an imaginary picture, but painted a portrait from the living subject. The ends of legitimate biography are best fulfilled, by avoiding unmerited censure on one hand, and unjust panegyric on the other.

The materials of this work consist of original letters and papers, some of which have been communicated by the family of the deceased, and others by his friends. A variety of incidents have been supplied in consequence of an acquaintance of several years duration; and of the various conversations, some were penned soon after they occurred, and others supplied from memory.

It cannot be denied, that the correspondence with Mr. Wilkes has, in some measure, become obsolete, by the lapse of

P R E F A C E.

vii

time ; it was absolutely necessary, however, to introduce it, for the purposes of elucidation ; but the speeches from the *Hustings*, ought assuredly to have been consigned to the Appendix. The letters between Mr. Horne Tooke and Junius require no apology, as they reflect equal honour on the head and heart of the former.

Those who may expect a work favourable either to the views or wishes of any religious sect, or political party, must be greatly disappointed ; and it is to be hoped, that the most fastidious critic will be unable to discover any thing in these pages in the smallest degree hostile to religion, public morals, or the happy genius and peculiar nature of our free and admirable constitution,

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Alexander Stephens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

(1736 TO 1765.)

*Of the Birth and Family of Mr. Horne—His
 Education and early Views—He obtains the
 Living of New Brentford—First Journey to
 France* 1

CHAP. II.

(1765 TO 1767.)

*Short Retrospect of Public Affairs on the Acces-
 sion of George III.—Characters of the Lords
 Chatham and Bute.—The Subject of this Me-
 moir determines to take an active Part in the
 Disputes of that Day.—Revisits France; where
 he meets with Mr. Wilkes.—Copy of a singular
 Letter transmitted from Montpelier.—He re-
 pairs to Italy* 44

CHAP. III.

(1768 TO 1769)

*Mr. Horne becomes a popular Preacher—a new
 Direction suddenly given to his Habits of Life,*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06160-5 - Memoirs of John Horne Tooke Interspersed with Original Documents: Volume 1

Alexander Stephens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

CONTENTS.

by the Middlesex Election—His successful Exertions in behalf of Mr. Wilkes and Serjeant Glynné—an Anecdote 84

C H A P. IV.

(1769 TO 1770.)

Account of Mr. Horne's printed Sermon.—Mr. Onslow commences an Action for a Libel.—The different Verdicts in that Cause.—Reflections 116

C H A P. V.

(1771.)

Mr. Horne suggests the Idea of a Reply to the King, and obtains a Statue for the Lord Mayor.—Founds the "Society for Supporting the Bill of Rights."—Countenances Bingley in his Refusal to answer Interrogatories 145

C H A P. VI.

(1770 TO 1771.)

Dispute and Correspondence with Mr. Wilkes 176

C H A P. VII.

(1771.)

Mr. Horne takes a Degree at Cambridge—On his return, he advocates the Cause of the Printers.—Result 320

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06160-5 - Memoirs of John Horne Tooke Interspersed with Original Documents: Volume 1

Alexander Stephens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS. xi

C H A P. VIII.

(1771.)

Controversy with Junius 352

C H A P. IX.

(1772 to 1777.)

Mr. Horne resigns his Gown, and retires to a Cottage—His Studies—Contests with the House of Commons—Tried for a Libel.—Characters of Mr. Thurlow and Lord Mansfield.—Sentence of the Court of King's Bench 416