

**REMARKS ON THE USE
AND ABUSE OF SOME
POLITICAL TERMS**

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Remarks on the use and abuse of some political terms by Sir George Cornewall Lewis & Thomas Raleigh

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SIR GEORGE CORNEWALL LEWIS & THOMAS RALEIGH

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THE USE AND ABUSE
OF SOME
POLITICAL TERMS

BY
SIR GEORGE CORNEWALL LEWIS, BART.
SOME TIME STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD

A NEW EDITION, WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTION

BY
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'Seal up the mouth of outrage for awhile,
'Till we can clear these ambiguities,
And know their spring, their head, their true descent.'
Romeo and Juliet, Act v. Scene 3

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

I

GEORGE CORNEWALL LEWIS, elder son of Mr. (afterwards Sir) T. Frankland Lewis, was born in London on the 21st April, 1806. At the preparatory school of M. Clément, and afterwards at Eton and Christ Church, he laid the foundation of that wide and accurate knowledge of books which gives weight to all his deliberate opinions. After leaving Oxford he read law for a time in the chambers of a special pleader; and he was one of the small but distinguished body of students who attended John Austin's lectures at University College, London. The first fruits of Austin's teaching were given to the public in the Essay reprinted in this volume.

George Lewis had chosen the Bar as his profession; but his health proved unequal to the strain; his connexion with the leaders of the Whig party introduced him to another and perhaps a more congenial kind of work. Following in the footsteps of his father, he made a special study of poor-law administration, and in 1833 he was appointed an Assistant-Commissioner, to report on the state of the Irish poor in the chief cities of Great Britain. He presented an able Report on the special subject assigned to him; his views on the state of Ireland generally were recorded in

two Essays, on *Local Disturbances*, and on *The Church Question*, which he published in one volume. The book was well received, but it was not a financial success. 'There is no market,' he says, 'for books on Irish subjects, unless they are full of religious bigotry.'

In 1836 John Austin and George Lewis were appointed Commissioners to report on the changes to be introduced into the laws and government of the island of Malta. Their appointment was hailed with joy by the local leaders of popular opinion, who thought that the Commissioners would bring with them a ready-made code, which would at once put an end to all abuses. But even abstract jurists, when they happen to be Englishmen, must inquire before they act; the process of reform was slow and troublesome. In the course of eighteen months a good beginning was made; an improved tariff, which we may conjecture to have been mainly the work of Lewis, gave relief to trade and industry; and something was done to relax the restraints which a succession of military governors had laid on the press. Austin's more ambitious plans of codification stood over for further inquiry when the Commissioners were recalled.

In 1839 George Lewis succeeded his father as one of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales. His tenure of this office was rendered unpleasant by the attacks of persons who vented their dislike of the amended poor-law of 1834 in abuse of those who administered it. Once Lewis was compelled to apply for a criminal information against a member of Parliament who accused him of conspiracy and falsehood; the result of the application was that the charge was withdrawn, and the case was settled out of court.

In 1844 Mr. Lewis married Lady Theresa Lister, widow of Mr. T. H. Lister and sister of the Earl of Clarendon. In 1847 he resigned his place at the Poor Law Board, and

in August of the same year he was returned to Parliament as one of the members for Herefordshire. Lord John Russell at once offered him the Secretaryship to the Board of Control, a post which he accepted with satisfaction, for the office-work which it involved was by no means burdensome, while at the same time it gave him an opportunity of becoming familiar with the details of Indian administration. From this, his first political office, he was transferred to the parliamentary Under-Secretaryship of the Home Department, and from the Home Office he was promoted to be Financial Secretary of the Treasury. In these subordinate positions Lewis established his reputation as an industrious and useful member of Parliament. He was not an eloquent speaker, but he commanded the confidence of the House of Commons because he was always well informed, always courteous, collected, and fair. He probably knew more about books than any of his colleagues or opponents; but in practical matters he was no doctrinaire; when he had to make an important speech, he usually began by trying to show that the measure which he supported was in accordance with the traditions of the public service.

At the general election of 1852 Lewis's parliamentary career was arrested for a time by two successive defeats. In July of that year he was dismissed by the electors of Herefordshire to make way for a protectionist; in the following November he was beaten at Peterborough by Mr. Whalley. He bore his disappointments calmly; returned, not without a sense of relief, to his books; and undertook, by way of holiday task, the editorship of the *Edinburgh Review*. The work to which the best of his mind was given at this period was an elaborate Essay *On the Credibility of Early Roman History*. His purpose in writing this book was purely negative; for Lewis, with all his varied acquirements, lacked many of the qualities of a great historian. He could not reconstruct the past; but he thought