

**EIGHT YEARS OF TORY
GOVERNMENT. 1895-1903.
HOME AFFAIRS. A HANDBOOK
FOR THE USE OF LIBERALS**

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Eight Years of Tory Government. 1895-1903. Home Affairs. A Handbook for the Use of Liberals
by Augustine Birrell

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AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

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BITTELL, Augustine.

EIGHT YEARS
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1895—1903.

HOME AFFAIRS.

A HANDBOOK

FOR THE

USE OF LIBERALS.

"In spite of the changes which have taken place, in spite of the great loss we have sustained in the withdrawal of Lord Salisbury's ripe experience from our Councils, it is still the same party and the same Government which is in power."—MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN at Birmingham, January 6th, 1903.

"Promising is the very air o' the time. . . . To promise is most courtly and fashionable: performance is a kind of will or testament which argues a great sickness in his judgement that makes it."—TIMON OF ATHENS.

1903.

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PREFACE.

A Handbook of present-day Politics which has nothing in it about Mr. Chamberlain's assault on Free Imports, and his ambition to clap taxes on the Bread and Meat of Forty Millions of People, may seem at first sight a book more remarkable for its omissions than for its actual contents, but, as a matter of fact, were we foolish enough to forget the history of the last few years in the fierce strife Mr. Chamberlain has deliberately provoked, we should be doing the very thing the astutest of electioneers would wish us to do.

No Government since the days of Charles the Second has so bad a record as the present Administration.

This Handbook is a blunt record of the actual achievements of the present Ministry in the various departments of State.

From a study of the following pages some idea may be gained of the calibre of Ministers—what sort of men they are, and what pains they have taken in war and peace to serve the country they have affected to govern.

The report of the War Commission unfolds a tale of stupidity, of downright incapacity, it is impossible even for a partisan to exaggerate. The best friends of the Government can say nothing in its defence. Collective responsibility there was none. The Intelligence Department reported that the Orange Free State would certainly throw in its lot with

President Kruger were war to be declared. Such a report was worthy of discussion. It is not unimportant to know, before you fight, with whom your fight will be. Mr. Balfour never read the report, and thought we were as likely to have to fight the Orange Free State as Switzerland. Mr. Chamberlain either shared Mr. Balfour's ignorance or kept him in it.

The Education Act is another instance of carefully nurtured and far-reaching ignorance. It has already broken down. Compromises are possible things, and often useful, but the Act of 1902 gave more to the Church of England than ten years ago the most grasping of ecclesiastics would have thought it wise even to suggest, whilst it took away from the Nonconformists what had been given them by the compromise of 1870. And Mr. Balfour is as astonished at the anger of the Nonconformist as he was to find himself at war with the Orange Free State!

Mr. Chamberlain has split the party he did so much to create eighteen years ago, and now seeks a fresh alliance with the Protectionist section of the old Tory party. This conduct has, of course, lent excitement to the situation—the cards are being shuffled afresh, and an old enemy sometimes makes a nice, new friend—but Liberals will do well if they stand by their old friends, and make a careful study of the character and achievements of the Administration now rapidly foundering on the rocks. Is any portion of it worth saving?

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

September 1st, 1903.

EDITORIAL NOTE.

This Handbook covers the record of the Tory Government on domestic questions from 1895 up to the end of the Session of 1903.

Every effort has been made to be accurate and to verify the quotations. Whilst it is too much to expect that with so many facts and figures there are no errors, it is hoped and believed that they will be found to be very few; a note of any that are discovered will be much appreciated by the Editor, addressed to 42, Parliament Street, S.W.

The Editor desires to express his sincere acknowledgments to the many friends who have assisted him in this compilation.

September, 1903.

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