

**JOSEPH STURGE,
HIS LIFE AND WORK**

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Joseph Sturge, his life and work by Stephen Hobhouse

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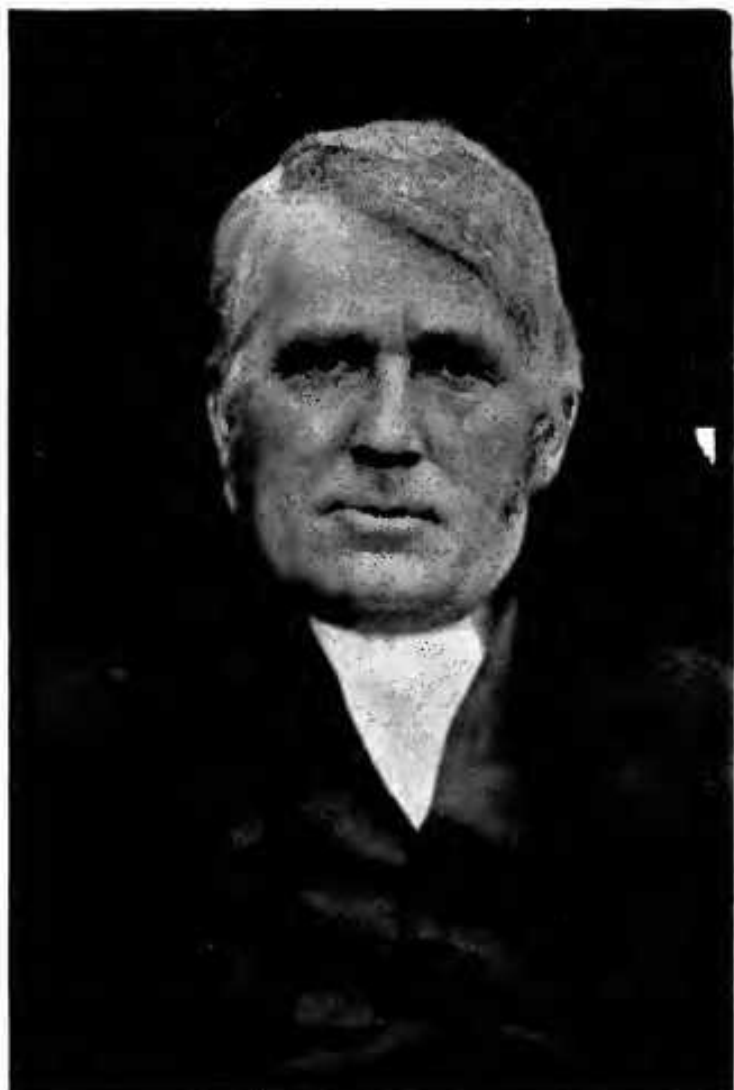
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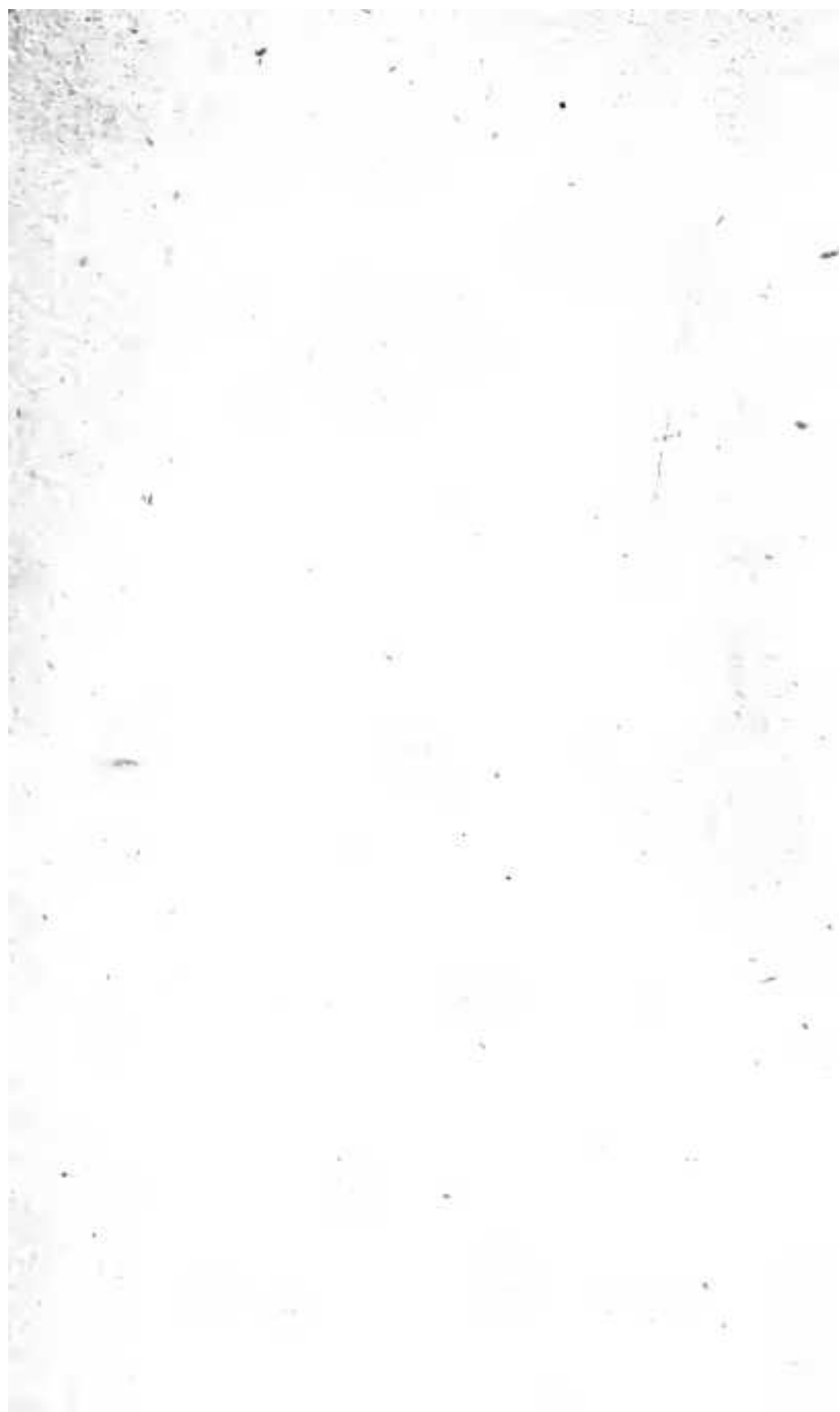
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PREFACE

CONSIDERABLE attention has deservedly been paid by recent historical research to the political movement known as Chartism; and to any student of that subject the name of Joseph Sturge will probably be familiar, owing to the conspicuous share which he had in its development, during one of the most critical years of the agitation. When adequate histories have been written of the movements for the abolition of negro slavery and the promotion of international peace, we are confident that some recognition will be given to the no less important part played by Sturge in these other fields of spiritual enterprise. It is not, however, to be expected that a historical treatise should give any adequate characterisation of the personalities of even the more important of the many actors in the drama, which it is attempting to unfold to its readers. The endeavour to draw a life-like picture of one strong and admirable personality is my reason for writing the pages contained in the present volume.

Memories are transient; and, in an age that lives so much by the printed word, only a very few of them are handed down over an interval of sixty years. It was already possible for Herbert Spencer, in his *Autobiography* composed some twenty-five or more years ago, to write of Joseph Sturge's name as "scarcely known to the present generation," (adding, with characteristic irony, that, had he been a military adventurer, his memory would have been cherished by a grateful nation). Four poems of John Greenleaf Whittier preserve some record of Sturge's name and worth. His effigy in weather-beaten marble stands at the meeting-point of the Five Ways in the city of Birmingham. But

only few, probably, among the thousands who daily pass the statue, know anything about the man whom it represents.

The materials for this short biography were collected during the earlier months of 1914; the completion of my work was however interrupted by the outbreak of war in August of that year, and by the new claims of the critical times that followed. The experiences of the four momentous years, that intervened before I resumed my task in August last, have perhaps somewhat dimmed the freshness of that literary acquaintance with a bygone personality, which may come very close indeed to actual friendship; but they have strengthened my faith in the great principles to which Joseph Sturge devoted his career, and they have given me a clearer idea of the limitations of vision, under which he and his fellow-workers, like all reformers, laboured in their application of those principles to life and society. Many of the opinions which I have expressed in this book are doubtless matters of controversy; but that is inevitable in a work, which aims at being not merely a chronicle, but also in some measure an interpretation, of human actions.

The deficiencies which exist in the treatment of my subject must be attributed partly to want of skill on the side of the author, and partly to the paucity of the available material. Richard Cobden wrote of Joseph Sturge in 1864: "He was a doer and not a talker or writer; and he left few records of himself to illustrate the depth or intensity of his feelings, or the lofty motives that impelled him to a life of incessant labour in the cause of humanity." Most of the personal records, that existed in 1864, have since been destroyed, or have otherwise disappeared. The present volume was of necessity dependent for the greater portion of its material upon the *Memoirs of Joseph Sturge*, published in the year just mentioned, from the pen of Sturge's intimate friend Henry Richard, secretary of the London Peace Society. This bulky work of 622 pages forms an interesting, accurate, and in many ways admirable description of his life and times; but it has long been out of print, and its author was too near the events which he records,

and too devoted a fellow-worker with his hero, to be able to form a sufficiently detached judgment as to persons and events. Nevertheless, my indebtedness to Richard's Memoirs appears upon most of the pages of this book.

I have, fortunately, been able to supplement this chief source of information in several important ways. The most noteworthy of these additional sources has been the collection of original letters and other documents made by the late Charles Dickinson Sturge, nephew of Joseph Sturge. These papers—supplemented by his own personal recollections—were kindly made available to me by their owner, who died in 1915, at the advanced age of eighty-two. I am also much indebted in various ways to the present Joseph Sturge, son of the subject of this biography; and to Miss Magdalen Evans, niece of Henry Richard, who courteously placed at my disposal all that has survived of her uncle's diaries and political correspondence. I have made use of a good deal of material gathered from the files of contemporary newspapers. Many of Cobden's letters to Richard have recently been transcribed by J. A. Hobson in his study entitled *Richard Cobden: The International Man*; and to Mr. Hobson I am grateful for permission to quote a few short extracts that appear in his book, as well as for other assistance rendered to me. G. Currie Martin has kindly supplied me with information, that has recently come to light, as to the early history of the Adult School movement. Among other friends and acquaintances, to whom acknowledgments are due for help in the preparation of these pages for the press, I would mention in particular Ernest E. Taylor, Norman Penney, C. Edmund Maurice, and the secretaries of the Peace and Anti-slavery Societies, which are still active in support of the two causes that shared perhaps the innermost place in the warm heart of Joseph Sturge.

STEPHEN HOBHOUSE.