THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE LETTERS OF JUNIUS ELUCIDATED: INCLUDING A BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR OF LIEUTENANT-COLONEL ISAAC BARRE, M. P.

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The Authorship of the Letters of Junius Elucidated: Including a Biographical Memoir of Lieutenant-Colonel Isaac Barre, M. P. by John Britton

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JOHN BRITTON

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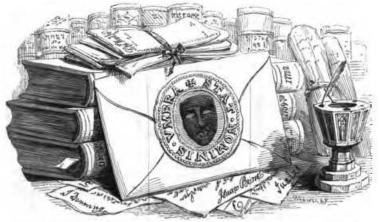
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LIEUTENANT-COLONEL ISAAC BARBÉ, M.P.

BY JOHN BRITTON, F.S.A.,

AUTHOR OF

THE "CATHEDRAL, AND THE ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUITIES," "A DICTIONARY OF THE ARCHITECTURE AND ARCHÆOLOGY OF THE MIDDLE AGES," &C.



Desum by F. W. Fairboit, from a Sketch by J. B.

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INVESTED with vast and varied powers, you have attained an influence, a dominion, surpassing that of any or all the autocrats of the world. Beyond and superior to legislative laws and equity decisions, you often influence and even control the makers of the one, and the authors of the other. Hence it is your bounden duty to be watchful and circumspect; to be honest and just; and, in admonishing the weak and the wicked, to inculcate the most stringent maxims of goodness and of wisdom. If the fertilizing waters of instruction flow from pure sources, and are skilfully distributed over the vast field of human intellect, the ever-teeming crops of knowledge must be abundant and substantially beneficial.

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To what, or to whom, can the present glorious and unparalleled state of Great Britain be ascribed but to your watchful guardianship—to your intrepidity—to your unflinching courage and liberty of speech? Be resolute in justifying, maintaining, and wisely employing these characteristics, and you may ultimately, it is hoped speedily,

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DEDICATION.

counteract and subdue not only all the direct, but also the insidious enemies of that civil liberty which is the birthright and boast of the "true born Englishman."

Junius inscribed his Letters to "THE ENGLISH NATION." I venture to address this humble Essay to the Mirror which reflects and fixes the moral and mental images of that nation; as the photogenic process imprints and preserves the archetypes of all objects which range within the focus of its lens.

As a veteran Author, ardently devoted to Literature for more than half a century, I cordially and sincerely reiterate the axiom of Junius, that "the liberty of the Press is the Palladium of all the civil, political, and religious rights of an Englishman !"

J. BRITTON.

March 1, 1848.

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PREFACE.

"OH, WHAT A TANGLED WEB WE WEAVE, WHEN FIRST WE PRACTISE TO DECEIVE."

Sir Walter Scott.

"I AN RESOLVED TO SNARCH FOR THEE : THE SEARCH ITSELF REWARDS THE PAIR."

Cowley.

"EVIDENCE ON A SUBJECT LIKE THIS, LONG PASSED AND PURPOSELY CLOUDED OVER FOR CONCEALMENT, MUST BE MADE UP OF MINUTE CIRCUMSTANCES, CLOSELY AND ACCURATELY EXAMINED, IF ANY LIGHT IS TO BE OBTAINED, WHEN CLAIMS ARE TO BE ADVANCED OR DISPROVED."-Gentleman's Magazine, Feb. 1849.

Anount of Time and Labour devoted to this Essay—First Clue to the Authorship of Junius's Letters—Alluded to by the present Writer on former Occasions—The Inquiry pursued assiduously for the last twelve Months—The Autror, Lieutenant-Colonel Barré; his Associates, lord Shelburne, and John Dunning—William Greatrakes, the presumed Amanuensis—His Story a Bomance—Character of the Letters—Mystery and Danger attending their Publication—Manners and Habits of Ministers—Freedom of the present Age—The Letters described and criticised by the Author, by Mitford, by Coleridge, and others—Acknowledgments to Correspondents.

WHEN I resolved to publish a new and distinct Essay, to elucidate the authorship of Junius's Letters, little did I anticipate the extent of labour and time which would be requisite to accomplish the task I had undertaken. Since I was first apprised of the source PREFACE.

whence they were believed by my informant to derive their origin, more than half a century has elapsed; and though I have since read many treatises, and heard various opinions respecting their authorship, I cannot find, in any of the parties hitherto named, the qualifications and traits of character peculiar to Junius : those characteristics are, however, combined in a pre-eminent degree in three eminent politicians who, for many successive years, spent their summer months at Bowood, in Wiltshire. At different times and in different publications, I have incidentally alluded to the place and parties; but I have forborne to name the author or to specify particulars, until I had an opportunity of investigating the case in all its bearings and relations. For the last twelve months I have sought by extensive reading, inquiry, and correspondence, to obtain authentic, satisfactory evidence; and the result is, that the materials which I have accumulated, whilst they serve to elucidate the political and private character and talents of the anonymous AUTHOR of the LETTERS,-LIEUTENANT-COLONEL BARRÉ-also point out and implicate his intimate associates LORD SHELBURNE and MR. DUNNING. There are likewise some extraordinary revelations respecting WILLIAM GREATBAKES, whose career in life, and the circumstances attending his death, with the disposal of his property, abound in mystery, and are pregnant with suspicion. The story of this gentleman is a romance of real life, and, like that of the concealed Author, is enveloped in a cloak of ambiguity and darkness ; yet it is confidently believed that he was the Amanuensis to Colonel Barré, and also his confidential To identify these persons and explain their agent and messenger. connection with the public correspondence referred to-to bring out facts of dates and deeds from the dark and intricate recesses in which they were studiously and cunningly concealed-to reconcile and account for contradictions and inconsistencies, have occasioned more

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anxiety, toil, and scrupulous analysis, than can possibly be imagined by any person who has never attempted a similar task. The issue and effects, however, are now submitted to that public tribunal, which invariably awards a proper and just decision, and which I feel assured will ultimately pronounce an impartial verdict, whether favourable or adverse to the author's hopes and opinions.

So strong was the sensation created by these alternately calumniated and extolled epistles, that they may be regarded as an integral part of the history of our country; and, candidly and honestly viewed, they will be found to constitute an important feature, not only in the political, but in the literary, the moral, and the philosophical annals of the nation. It is my conviction that had they never appeared-had not their publication been met by state prosecutions-had not their elements and principles produced an extensive influence on the public mind-the existing generation would have been deprived of many political privileges and advantages which they now actually possess. The abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts, Catholic Emancipation, and Reform of Parliament, might, I am persuaded, have been unknown in the present peaceful age, if the "Letters of Junius" had not led the way to that free and unfettered expression of public opinion which has produced such important results.

It will not be difficult to prove that the "Letters of Junius" have tended, in a most essential manner, to produce the present state of free and fearless discussion which characterises the press of this country. The tone and sentiment which pervade those eloquent epistles have been revived in many modern periodicals.

When I commenced my present arduous and delicate task, I expected to bring my observations and deductions within the compass of a few pages, so as to form part of the AUTO-BIOGRAPHY