

of his hero—the narrative of the events in which he played a part—should hang too loosely to his figure. There is also the danger that the frame, so to speak, should not be given its due value in the portrait. In order to appreciate the part played in public affairs by an individual, it is necessary to understand what is going on. As this book has been written for the general public, I have felt it desirable to retell certain episodes in modern politics, in which Mr. Labouchere played an important part, in greater detail than would have been necessary had I been writing for politicians. In such retelling I claim no originality. I have followed standard authorities, and the point of view of my narrative has been, to a great extent, that of Mr. Labouchere himself, although, when I have come to the conclusion that that point of view was mistaken, I have not hesitated to say so. In this way I hope that the reader may be enabled to see the inevitability of much of Labouchere's political action, which at the time, looked at piecemeal, may have appeared gratuitously mischievous.

I feel I ought to call the reader's attention to the fact that if Mr. Labouchere's many-sided life is considered as a whole, his political proceedings represent but a small part of his activity. He had lived an average lifetime before he seriously took up political work, and genuine *his* principles undoubtedly were, still politics were never *ally* more to him than a means of self-expression and, it must be said, amusement. He loved watching the spectacle of life, and he came to find in the game of politics a sort of concentrated version of life as a whole. This feeling, the strongest perhaps that he possessed, combined with a passion to enter as an effective cause into the spectacle he loved, was responsible for his political incarnation. And he had a certain half-perverse, half-childish love of mischief which he was not always at pains to restrain, and which found in the intrigues of parties and groups abundant scope for exercise. It could not have found