

CHAPTER XXIX.

1809.

VACANCY IN THE CHANCELLORSHIP OF OXFORD. — LORD ELDON A CANDIDATE, AGAINST LORD GRENVILLE AND THE DUKE OF BEAUFORT. — LETTERS OF LORD ELDON TO SEVERAL MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY. — LORD GRENVILLE ELECTED. — LETTERS, OF LORD ELDON TO HIS FAMILY, AND OF THE KING TO LORD ELDON, AND EXTRACT FROM THE ANECDOTE BOOK RESPECTING THE CONTEST.

WHILE the arrangements for the reconstruction of the Cabinet were still in progress, a new subject of interest for Lord Eldon had arisen, out of the vacancy which the death of the Duke of Portland, on the 30th of October, occasioned in the Chancellorship of the University of Oxford. When it was first suggested to Lord Eldon to offer himself for that honour, his own inclination was to disclaim all pretensions to it; and he so expressed himself to his usual confidant, Sir William Scott, in a letter of which some extracts follow, relating to this and other topics.

Lord Eldon to Sir W. Scott. — (Extract.)

“As to the prosecution of the ‘Morning Chronicle,’ and as to *your friend* Cobbett, I know what I should have done as to those publications long ago, if I had been Attorney-General; but it seems to me that ever since my time it has been thought right to leave the Government’s character, and individual character, without the protection of the law enforced, because I had proved its efficacy when it was called into exertion. I am very sore upon this subject; I have

growled and grumbled about it till I am weary. As to Cobbett, I am quite out of patience about those who will take in his paper; but I observe that all my friends, in short everybody one knows, abuse him, but enjoy his abuse, till he taps at their own door, and then they don't like the noise he makes — not a bit of it.

“As to the Chancellorship of the University, brother, it really seems impossible to be decisive about it. If it is *necessary* that I should be so to others, or to you at least, I have no possible alternative, if I am ever so wrong in that view of it, but to say positively *No*.”

A few days, however, brought a direct proposal from a powerful party in the University; and Lord Eldon, believing it ascertained that the Duke of Beaufort, who had been much spoken of as a candidate, had resolved to decline the contest, now permitted himself to be put in nomination, and entered warmly into the spirit of the election, as against Lord Grenville, whom he expected to find his only competitor.

Lord Eldon to the Honourable Mrs. Scott, (the Widow of his eldest Son). — (Extract.)

(Not dated; written probably Nov. 1809.)

“After what passed between you and me about *honours*, you will be surprised to hear that I am involved in a contest about a very great honour. But I think it my duty *myself* to let *you* know that, *to my own great surprise*, I am so involved—I have been, as I thought, compelled to accede to the request of a considerable and respectable body of Oxonians, expressed to me in the most pressing terms, and urged upon the grounds of great public principles, to allow them to name me as a candidate for the Chancellorship of Oxford. The attainment of this honour, or disappointment of their endeavours to succeed for me in this matter, as they have involved me in it, cannot but be deeply interesting to all, who, in any way, wish to add to the respect and regard in which I, or those who may come after me, may be held in this country, and it is