

the county of Buckingham. It was about 600 acres in extent, was worth some £500 a year, and cost £22,000. People have been asking ever since how the penniless man of letters was able to raise so large a sum in the first instance, and how he was able to keep up a respectable establishment afterwards. The suspicions of those who are never sorry to disparage the great have been of various kinds. Burke was a gambler, they hint, in Indian stock, like his kinsmen, Richard and William, and like Lord Verney, his political patron at Wendover. Perhaps, again, his activity on behalf of Indian princes, like the Raja of Tanjore, was not disinterested and did not go unrewarded. The answer to all these calumnious innuendoes is to be found in documents and title-deeds of decisive authority, and is simple enough. It is, in short, this. Burke inherited a small property from his elder brother, which he realized. Lord Rockingham advanced him a certain sum (£6000). The remainder, amounting to no less than two-thirds of the purchase-money, was raised on mortgage, and was never paid off during Burke's life. The rest of the story is equally simple, but more painful. Burke made some sort of income out of his 600 acres; he was for a short time agent for New York, with a salary of £700; he continued to work at the *Annual Register* down to 1788. But, when all is told, he never made as much as he spent; and in spite of considerable assistance from Lord Rockingham, amounting it is sometimes said to as much as £30,000, Burke, like the younger Pitt, got every year deeper into debt. Pitt's debts were the result of a wasteful indifference to his private affairs. Burke, on the contrary, was assiduous and orderly, and had none of the vices of profusion. But he had that quality which Aristotle places high among the virtues,—the noble mean of Magnificence, standing midway between the two extremes of vulgar ostentation and narrow pettiness. He was indifferent to luxury, and sought to make life, not commodious nor soft, but high and dignified in a refined way. He loved art, filled his house with statues and pictures, and extended a generous patronage to the painters. He was a collector of books, and, as Crabbe and less conspicuous men discovered, a helpful friend to their writers. Guests were ever welcome at his board: the opulence of his mind and the fervid copiousness of his talk naturally made the guests of such a man very numerous. *Non in video equidem, miror magis*, was Johnson's good-natured remark, when he was taken over his friend's fine house and pleasant gardens. Johnson was of a very different type. There was something in this external dignity which went with Burke's imperious spirit, his spacious imagination, his turn for all things stately and imposing. We may say, if we please, that Johnson had the far truer and loftier dignity of the two; but we have to take such men as Burke with the defects that belong to their qualities. And there was no corruption in Burke's outlay. When the Pitt administration was formed in 1766, he might have had office, and Lord Rockingham wished him to accept it, but he honourably took his fate with the party. He may have spent £3000 a year, where he would have been more prudent to spend only £2000. But nobody was wronged; his creditors were all paid in time, and his hands were at least clean of traffic in reversions, clerkships, tellerships, and all the rest of the rich sinecures which it was thought no shame in those days for the aristocracy of the land and the robe to wrangle for, and gorge themselves upon, with the fierce voracity of famishing wolves. The most we can say is that Burke, like Pitt, was too deeply absorbed in beneficent service in the affairs of his country, to have for his own affairs the solicitude that would have been prudent.

In the midst of intense political preoccupations, Burke always found time to keep up his intimacy with the bril-

liant group of his earlier friends. He was one of the commanding figures at the Club at the Turk's Head, with Reynolds and Garrick, Goldsmith and Johnson. The old sage who held that the first Whig was the Devil, was yet compelled to forgive Burke's politics for the sake of his magnificent gifts. "I would not talk to him of the Rockingham party," he used to say, "but I love his knowledge, his genius, his diffusion and affluence of conversation." And everybody knows Johnson's vivid account of him: "Burke, Sir, is such a man that if you met him for the first time in the street, where you were stopped by a drove of oxen, and you and he stepped aside to take shelter but for five minutes, he'd talk to you in such a manner that when you parted you would say, 'This is an extraordinary man.'" They all grieved that public business should draw to party what was meant for mankind. They deplored that the nice and difficult test of answering Berkeley had not been undertaken, as was once intended, by Burke, and sighed to think what an admirable display of subtlety and brilliance such a contention would have afforded them, had not politics "turned him from active philosophy aside." There was no jealousy in this. They did not grudge Burke being the first man in the House of Commons, for they admitted that he would have been the first man anywhere.

With all his hatred for the book-man in politics, Burke owed much of his own distinction to that generous richness and breadth of judgment which had been ripened in him by literature and his practice in it. Like some other men in our history, he showed that books are a better preparation for statesmanship than early training in the subordinate posts and among the permanent officials of a public department. There is no copiousness of literary reference in his work, such as over-abounded in our civil and ecclesiastical publicists of the 17th century. Nor can we truly say that there is much, though there is certainly some, of that tact which literature is alleged to confer on those who approach it in a just spirit and with the true gift. The influence of literature on Burke lay partly in the direction of emancipation from the mechanical formulæ of practical politics; partly, in the association which it engendered, in a powerful understanding like his, between politics and the moral forces of the world, and between political maxims and the old and great sentences of morals; partly in drawing him, even when resting his case on prudence and expediency, to appeal to the widest and highest sympathies; partly, and more than all, in opening his thoughts to the many conditions, possibilities, and "varieties of untried being," in human character and situation, and so giving an incomparable flexibility to his methods of political approach.

This flexibility is not to be found in his manner of composition. That derives its immense power from other sources; from passion, intensity, imagination, size, truth, cogency of logical reason. Those who insist on charm, on winningness in style, on subtle harmonies and fine exquisiteness of suggestion, are disappointed in Burke: they even find him stiff and over-coloured. And there are blemishes of this kind. His banter is nearly always ungainly, his wit blunt, as Johnson said, and often unseasonable. As is usual with a man who has not true humour, Burke is also without true pathos. The thought of wrong or misery moved him less to pity for the victim than to anger against the cause. Again, there are some gratuitous and unredeemed vulgarities; some images that make us shudder. But only a literary fop can be detained by specks like these.

The varieties of Burke's literary or rhetorical method are very striking. It is almost incredible that the superb imaginative amplification of the description of Hyder Ali's descent upon the Carnatic should be from the same pen as

the grave, simple, unadorned *Address to the King* (1777), where each sentence falls on the ear with the accent of some golden-tongued oracle of the wise gods. His stride is the stride of a giant, from the sentimental beauty of the picture of Marie Antoinette at Versailles, or the red horror of the tale of Debi Sing in Rungpore, to the learning, positiveness, and cool judicial mastery of the *Report on the Lords' Journals* (1794), which Philip Francis, no mean judge, declared on the whole to be the "most eminent and extraordinary" of all his productions. But even in the coolest and driest of his pieces, there is the mark of greatness, of grasp, of comprehension. In all its varieties Burke's style is noble, earnest, deep-flowing, because his sentiment was lofty and fervid, and went with sincerity and ardent disciplined travail of judgment. He had the style of his subjects; the amplitude, the weightiness, the laboriousness, the sense, the high flight, the grandeur, proper to a man dealing with imperial themes, with the fortunes of great societies, with the sacredness of law, the freedom of nations, the justice of rulers. Burke will always be read with delight and edification, because in the midst of discussions on the local and the accidental, he scatters apophthegms that take us into the regions of lasting wisdom. In the midst of the torrent of his most strenuous and passionate deliverances, he suddenly rises aloof from his immediate subject, and in all tranquillity reminds us of some permanent relation of things, some enduring truth of human life or human society. We do not hear the organ tones of Milton, for faith and freedom had other notes in the 18th century. There is none of the complacent and wise-browed sagacity of Bacon, for Burke's were days of personal strife and fire and civil division. We are not exhilarated by the cheerfulness, the polish, the fine manners of Bolingbroke, for Burke had an anxious conscience and was earnest and intent that the good should triumph. And yet Burke is among the greatest of those who have wrought marvels in the prose of our English tongue.

Not all the transactions in which Burke was a combatant could furnish an imperial theme. We need scarcely tell over again the story of Wilkes and the Middlesex election. The Rockingham ministry had been succeeded by a composite Government, of which it was intended that Pitt, now made Lord Chatham and Privy Seal, should be the real chief. Chatham's health and mind fell into disorder almost immediately after the ministry had been formed. The duke of Grafton was its nominal head, but party ties had been broken, the political connections of the ministers were dissolved, and, in truth, the king was now at last a king indeed, who not only reigned but governed. The revival of high doctrines of prerogative in the Crown was accompanied by a revival of high doctrines of privilege in the House of Commons, and the ministry was so smitten with weakness and confusion as to be unable to resist the current of arbitrary policy, and not many of them were even willing to resist it. The unconstitutional prosecution of Wilkes was followed by the fatal recourse to new plans for raising taxes in the American colonies. These two points made the rallying ground of the new Whig opposition. Burke helped to smooth matters for a practical union between the Rockingham party and the powerful triumvirate, composed of Chatham, whose understanding had recovered from its late disorder, and of his brothers-in-law, Lord Temple and George Grenville. He was active in urging petitions from the freeholders of the counties, protesting against the unconstitutional invasion of the right of election. And he added a durable masterpiece to our political literature in a pamphlet which he called *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770). The immediate object of this excellent piece was to hold up the court scheme of weak, divided, and dependent administrations in the light of its

real purpose and design; to describe the distempers which had been engendered in parliament by the growth of royal influence and the faction of the king's friends; to show that the newly-formed Whig party had combined for truly public ends, and was no mere family knot like the Grenvilles and the Bedfords; and, finally, to press for the hearty concurrence both of public men and of the nation at large in combining against "a faction ruling by the private instructions of a court against the general sense of the people." The pamphlet was disliked by Chatham on the one hand, on no reasonable grounds that we can discover; it was denounced by the extreme popular party of the Bill of Rights, on the other hand, for its moderation and conservatism. In truth, there is as strong a vein of conservative feeling in the pamphlet of 1770 as in the more resplendent pamphlet of 1790. "Our constitution," he said, "stands on a nice equipoise, with steep precipices and deep waters upon all sides of it. In removing it from a dangerous leaning towards one side, there may be a risk of oversetting it on the other. Every project of a material change in a government so complicated as ours is a matter full of difficulties; in which a considerate man will not be too ready to decide, a prudent man too ready to undertake, or an honest man too ready to promise." Neither now nor ever had Burke any other real conception of a polity for England than government by the territorial aristocracy in the interests of the nation at large, and especially in the interests of commerce, to the vital importance of which in our economy he was always keenly and wisely alive. The policy of George III., and the support which it found among men who were weary of Whig factions, disturbed this scheme, and therefore Burke denounced both the court policy and the court party with all his heart and all his strength.

Eloquence and good sense, however, were impotent in the face of such forces as were at this time arrayed against a Government at once strong and liberal. The court was confident that a union between Chatham and the Rockinghams was impossible. The union was in fact hindered by the waywardness and the absurd pretences of Chatham, and the want of force in Lord Rockingham. In the nation at large, the late violent ferment had been followed by as remarkable a deadness and vapidness, and Burke himself had to admit a year or two later that any remarkable robbery at Hounslow Heath would make more conversation than all the disturbances of America. The duke of Grafton went out, and Lord North became the head of a Government, which lasted twelve years (1770-1782), and brought about more than all the disasters that Burke had foretold as the inevitable issue of the royal policy. For the first six years of this lamentable period Burke was actively employed in stimulating, informing, and guiding the patrician chiefs of his party. "Indeed, Burke," said the duke of Richmond, "you have more merit than any man in keeping us together." They were well meaning and patriotic men, but it was not always easy to get them to prefer politics to fox-hunting. When he reached his lodgings at night after a day in the city or a skirmish in the House of Commons, Burke used to find a note from the duke of Richmond or the marquis of Rockingham, praying him to draw a protest to be entered on the Journals of the Lords, and in fact he drew all the principal protests of his party between 1767 and 1782. The accession of Charles James Fox to the Whig party, which took place at this time, and was so important an event in its history, was mainly due to the teaching and influence of Burke. In the House of Commons his industry was almost excessive. He was taxed with speaking too often, and with being too forward. And he was mortified by a more serious charge than murmurs about superfluity of zeal. Men said and said again that he was Junius. His very proper unwillingness to stoop to

any an accusation, that would have been so disgraceful if it had been true, made ill-natured and silly people the more convinced that it was not wholly false. And the preposterous charge has never wholly died out. But whatever the London world may have thought of him, Burke's energy and devotion of character impressed the better minds in the country. In 1774 he received the great distinction of being chosen as one of its representatives by Bristol, then the second town in the kingdom.

In the events which ended in the emancipation of the American colonies from the monarchy, Burke's political genius shone with an effulgence that was worthy of the great affairs over which it shed so magnificent an illumination. His speeches are almost the one monument of the struggle on which a lover of English greatness can look back with pride and a sense of worthiness, such as a churchman feels when he reads Bossuet, or an Anglican when he turns over the pages of Taylor or of Hooker. Burke's attitude in these high transactions is really more impressive than Chatham's, because he was far less theatrical than Chatham; and while he was no less nobly passionate for freedom and justice, in his passion was fused the most strenuous political argumentation and sterling reason of state. On the other hand he was wholly free from that quality which he ascribed to Lord George Sackville, a man "apt to take a sort of undecided, equivocal, narrow ground, that evades the substantial merits of the question, and puts the whole upon some temporary, local, accidental, or personal consideration." He rose to the full height of that great argument. Burke here and everywhere else displayed the rare art of filling his subject with generalities, and yet never intruding common-places. No publicist who deals as largely in general propositions has ever been as free from truisms; no one has ever treated great themes with so much elevation, and yet been so wholly secured against the pitfalls of emptiness and the vague. And it is instructive to compare the foundation of all his pleas for the colonists with that on which they erected their own theoretic declaration of independence. The American leaders were impregnated with the metaphysical ideas of rights which had come to them from the rising revolutionary school in France. Burke no more adopted the doctrines of Jefferson in 1776 than he adopted the doctrines of Robespierre in 1793. He says nothing about men being born free and equal, and on the other hand he never denies the position of the court and the country at large, that the home legislature, being sovereign, had the right to tax the colonies. What he does say is that the exercise of such a right was not practicable; that if it were practicable, it was inexpedient; and that, even if this had not been inexpedient, yet, after the colonies had taken to arms, to crush their resistance by military force would not be more disastrous to them than it would be unfortunate for the ancient liberties of Great Britain. Into abstract discussion he would not enter. "Show the thing you contend for to be reason; show it to be common sense; show it to be the means of attaining some useful end." "The question with me is not whether you have a right to render your people miserable, but whether it is not your interest to make them happy." There is no difference in social spirit and doctrine between his protests against the maxims of the English common people as to the colonists and his protests against the maxims of the French common people as to the court and the nobles; and it is impossible to find a single principle either asserted or implied in the speeches on the American revolution which was afterwards repudiated in the writings on the Revolution in France.

It is one of the signs of Burke's singular and varied eminence that hardly any two people agree precisely which of his works to mark as the masterpiece. Every speech or

tract that he composed on a great subject becomes, as we read it, the rival of every other. But the *Speech on Conciliation* (1775) has, perhaps, been more universally admired than any of his other productions, partly because its maxims are of a simpler and less disputable kind than those which adorn the pieces on France, and partly because it is most strongly characterized by that deep ethical quality which is the prime secret of Burke's great style and literary mastery. In this speech, moreover, and in the only less powerful one of the preceding year upon American taxation, as well as in the *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol* in 1777, we see the all-important truth conspicuously illustrated that half of his eloquence always comes of the thoroughness with which he gets up his case. No eminent man has ever done more than Burke to justify the definition of genius as the consummation of the faculty of taking pains. Labour incessant and intense, if it was not the source, was at least an inseparable condition of his power. And magnificent rhetorician though he was, his labour was given less to his diction than to the facts; his heart was less in the form than the matter. It is true that his manuscripts were blotted and smeared, and that he made so many alterations in the proofs that the printer found it worth while to have the whole set up in type afresh. But there is no polish in his style, as in that of Junius for example, though there is something a thousand times better than polish. "Why will you not allow yourself to be persuaded," said Francis after reading the *Reflections*, "that polish is material to preservation?" Burke always accepted the rebuke, and flung himself into vindication of the sense, substance, and veracity of what he had written. His writing is magnificent, because he knew so much, thought so comprehensively, and felt so strongly.

The succession of failures in America, culminating in Cornwallis's surrender at York Town in October 1781, wearied the nation, and at length the persistent and powerful attacks of the opposition began to tell. "At this time," wrote Burke, in words of manly self-assertion, thirteen years afterwards, "having a momentary lead (1780-2), so aided and so encouraged, and as a feeble instrument in a mighty hand,—I do not say I saved my country,—I am sure I did my country important service. There were few indeed at that time that did not acknowledge it. It was but one voice, that no man in the kingdom better deserved an honourable provision should be made for him." In the spring of 1782 Lord North resigned. It seemed as if the court system which Burke had been denouncing for a dozen years was now finally broken, and as if the party which he had been the chief instrument in instructing, directing, and keeping together must now inevitably possess power for many years to come. Yet in a few months the whole fabric had fallen, and the Whigs were thrown into opposition for the rest of the century. The story cannot be omitted in the most summary account of Burke's life. Lord Rockingham came into office on the fall of North. Burke was rewarded for services beyond price by being made Paymaster of the Forces, with the rank of a Privy Councillor. He had lost his seat for Bristol two years before, in consequence of his courageous advocacy of a measure of tolerance for the Catholics, and his still more courageous exposure of the enormities of the commercial policy of England towards Ireland. He sat during the rest of his parliamentary life (to 1794) for Malton, a pocket borough first of Lord Rockingham's, then of Lord Fitzwilliam's. Burke's first tenure of office was very brief. He had brought forward in 1780 a comprehensive scheme of economical reform, with the design of limiting the resources of jobbery and corruption which the Crown was able to use to strengthen its own sinister influence in Parliament. Administrative reform was next

to peace with the colonies, the part of the scheme of the new ministry to which the king most warmly objected. It was carried out with greater moderation than had been foreshadowed in opposition. But at any rate Burke's own office was not spared. While Charles Fox's father was at the pay-office (1765-1778) he realized as the interest of the cash balances which he was allowed to retain in his hands, nearly a quarter of a million of money. When Burke came to this post the salary was settled at £4000 a year. He did not enjoy the income long. In July 1782 Lord Rockingham died; Lord Shelburne took his place; Fox, who inherited from his father a belief in Lord Shelburne's duplicity, which his own experience of him as a colleague during the last three months had made stronger, declined to serve under him. Burke, though he had not encouraged Fox to take this step, still with his usual loyalty followed him out of office. This may have been a proper thing to do if their distrust of Shelburne was incurable, but the next step, coalition with Lord North against him, was not only a political blunder, but a shock to party morality, which brought speedy retribution. Either they had been wrong, and violently wrong, for a dozen years, or else Lord North was the guiltiest political instrument since Strafford. Burke attempted to defend the alliance on the ground of the substantial agreement between Fox and North in public aims. The defence is wholly untenable. The Rockingham Whigs were as substantially in agreement on public affairs with the Shelburne Whigs as they were with Lord North. The movement was one of the worst in the history of English party. It served its immediate purpose, however, for Lord Shelburne found himself (February 24, 1783) too weak to carry on the government, and was succeeded by the members of the coalition, with the duke of Portland for prime minister (April 2, 1783). Burke went back to his old post at the pay-office and was soon engaged in framing and drawing the famous India Bill. This was long supposed to be the work of Fox, who was politically responsible for it. We may be sure that neither he nor Burke would have devised any government for India which they did not honestly believe to be for the advantage both of that country and of England. But it cannot be disguised that Burke had thoroughly persuaded himself that it was indispensable in the interests of English freedom to strengthen the party hostile to the court. As we have already said, dread of the peril to the constitution from the new aims of George III was the main inspiration of Burke's political action in home affairs for the best part of his political life. The India Bill strengthened the anti-court party by transferring the government of India to seven persons named in the Bill, and neither appointed nor removable by the Crown. In other words, the Bill gave the government to a board chosen directly by the House of Commons; and it had the incidental advantage of conferring on the ministerial party patronage valued at £300,000 a year, which would remain for a fixed term of years out of reach of the king. In a word, judging the India Bill from a party point of view, we see that Burke was now completing the aim of his project of economic reform. That measure had weakened the influence of the Crown by limiting its patronage. The measure for India weakened the influence of the Crown by giving a mass of patronage to the party which the king hated. But this was not to be. The India Bill was thrown out by means of a royal intrigue in the Lords, and the ministers were instantly dismissed (December 18, 1783). Young William Pitt, then only in his twenty-fifth year, had been Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Shelburne's short ministry, and had refused to enter the coalition Government from an honourable repugnance to join Lord North. He was now made prime minister. The country in the election of the next

year ratified the king's judgment against the Portland combination; and the hopes which Burke had cherished for a political life-time were irretrievably ruined.

The six years that followed the great rout of the orthodox Whigs were years of repose for the country, but it was now that Burke engaged in the most laborious and formidable enterprize of his life, the impeachment of Warren Hastings for high crimes and misdemeanours in his government of India. His interest in that country was of old date. It arose partly from the fact of William Burke's residence there, partly from his friendship with Philip Francis, but most of all, we suspect, from the effect which he observed Indian influence to have in demoralizing the House of Commons. "Take my advice for once in your life," Francis wrote to Shee; "lay aside 40,000 rupees for a seat in Parliament: in this country that alone makes all the difference between somebody and nobody." The relations, moreover, between the East India Company and the Government were of the most important kind, and occupied Burke's closest attention from the beginning of the American war down to his own India Bill and that of Pitt and Dundas. In February 1785 he delivered one of the most famous of all his speeches, that on the nabob of Arcot's debts. The real point of this superb declamation was Burke's conviction that ministers supported the claims of the fraudulent creditors in order to secure the corrupt advantages of a sinister parliamentary interest. His proceedings against Hastings had a deeper spring. The story of Hastings's crimes, as Macaulay says, made the blood of Burke boil in his veins. He had a native abhorrence of cruelty, of injustice, of disorder, of oppression, of tyranny, and all these things in all their degrees marked Hastings's course in India. They were, moreover, concentrated in individual cases, which exercised Burke's passionate imagination to its profoundest depths, and raised it to such a glow of fiery intensity as has never been rivalled in our history. For it endured for fourteen years, and was just as burning and as terrible when Hastings was acquitted in 1795, as in the Select Committee of 1781 when Hastings's enormities were first revealed. "If I were to call for a reward," wrote Burke, "it would be for the services in which for fourteen years, without intermission, I showed the most industry and had the least success, I mean in the affairs of India; they are those on which I value myself the most; most for the importance; most for the labour; most for the judgment; most for constancy and perseverance in the pursuit." Sheridan's speech in the House of Commons upon the charge relative to the Begums of Oude probably excelled anything that Burke achieved, as a dazzling performance abounding in the most surprising literary and rhetorical effects. But neither Sheridan nor Fox was capable of that sustained and overflowing indignation at outraged justice and oppressed humanity, that consuming moral fire, which burst forth again and again from the chief manager of the impeachment, with such scorching might as drove even the cool and intrepid Hastings beyond all self-control, and made him cry out with protests and exclamations like a criminal writhing under the scourge. Burke, no doubt, in the course of that unparalleled trial showed some prejudice; made some minor overstatements of his case; used many intemperances; and suffered himself to be provoked into expressions of heat and impatience by the cabals of the defendant and his party, and the intolerable incompetence of the tribunal. It is one of the inscrutable perplexities of human affairs, that in the logic of practical life, in order to reach conclusions that cover enough for truth, we are constantly driven to premises that cover too much, and that in order to secure their right weight to justice and reason, good men are forced to fling the two-edged sword of passion into the same scale. But these excuses were