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M E M O I R
OF THE POLITICAL LIFE
OF THE RIGHT HON.
E D M U N D B U R K E.

PRINTED BY JOHN STARK, EDINBURGH.



Sir Joshua Reynolds, portrait

J. Brown, 1811

THE LIFE OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, BART.

A
MEMOIR
OF THE
POLITICAL LIFE OF
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
EDMUND BURKE;

WITH EXTRACTS FROM HIS WRITINGS.

"Burke, the greatest of political philosophers."

SIR J. MACKINTOSH.

BY
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VOLUME FIRST.

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M.DCCC.XL.

P R E F A C E.

SOME years ago, when the feelings of the people were strongly disturbed by theories of political change, a considerable number of works were issued from the press, with the object of allaying the public excitement. Among the rest the following pages appeared. It was thought, that, in a period singularly resembling that which immediately preceded the French Revolution of 1789, there might be some advantage in laying before the public, in a more succinct and accessible form than in his volumes, the opinions of that extraordinary and powerful mind, which had acted so large a part in saving England and her monarchy from the errors of the French throne, and the crimes of the Republic.

The rank of Burke, as a writer of consummate eloquence, had been decided from the beginning of his career ; the progress of the Revolution placed him in equal eminence as a Statesman ; and every year since has added to his renown as a prophet. While the works of this admirable mind are left to us, the country is in possession of a storehouse of political wisdom, from which she cannot supply herself too largely, or too often ; she has a great Oracle, to whose responses she cannot trust with a too solemn reliance ; for the peculiar and pre-eminent character of Burke's genius was its love of reality. With the most palpable powers for reaching the loftiest heights of speculation, he is the least abstract of all speculators. With the poetic fancy which so strongly tempts its possessor to spurn the ground,

“ Among the colours of the rainbow live,
And play in the plighted clouds,”

and with an opulence of language that, like the tissues thrown on the road of an oriental prince, covered the wild and the thorny before him

with richness and beauty, he never suffers himself to forget the value of *things*. The application of reason to the purposes of life; the study of the sources of moral strength; the inquiry into that true "wealth of nations," which makes men safer from the shocks of society, are his perpetual object.—He pours his river through the moral landscape, not to astonish by its rapidity and volume, or delight by its picturesque windings, but to carry fertility on its surface, and gold in its sands.

The papers which form the present publication originally appeared in Blackwood's Magazine, a work which, by the constitutional truth and manliness of its principles, had acquired extensive credit with a people, who love fair-dealing and fearlessness like their own. The republicanism which they then offered their contribution to oppose, has since broken out, with still more formidable menace to the State. The boldest pretext of overthrow had hitherto never gone beyond the "improvement of the Constitution." But, we now hear a demand for

a new fabric. What was once Reform, is now Revolution; Monarchy, once admitted by all parties to be the natural Government of the State, is now pronounced a prejudice, and the popular aspiration is Democracy. And this new terror is no dream of the study; no thin shape of mysticism floating before the eyes of visionaries; Ribandism and Chartism are its substantial forms. However widely differing in their origin, their determination is the same. Travelling by different routes, they march to the same point; and whether hatred of the Church leads them to subvert the Throne, or hatred of the Throne, to subvert the Church, neither will have achieved its object, until both meet on the ruins of the Constitution. That the property and intelligence of the Empire, when once roused, will resist courageously, and if roused early enough will resist triumphantly, is beyond question. But it will be too late, when the twin conspiracies shall have become one, and when the people of England shall see some new and monstrous shape of govern-

ment demanding their submission ; some huge, crude, and presumptuous Babel of Society, at once threatening Earth, and insulting Heaven ; some new “ City and Tower” of infidel building ; where the Democratic Principle, known only by its evil attributes ; like an Indian Idol, with its hundred hands grasping only swords and serpents ; shall sit to be worshipped with the horrid and sanguinary rites of superstition, or the still more horrid impurities of popular passion, let loose to riot without fear of God or man.

That the nation may yet emerge from those trials ; we may be justified in believing, for she had emerged before. But it is equally evident, that if she does, it must be by the same vigour, and virtue, which then ensured her safety. When Burke wrote his immortal “ Reflections on the French Revolution,” there were thousands in England as full of frenzy, as ever were the wearers of crowns of straw. Every public sense was in a state of illusion, France was the great

temptress, and to the multitude, her naked antics were dignity, her blasphemies the language of nature, and her unspeakable bloodshed the inevitable price of freedom. A crowd of writers, some of remarkable popular ability, and all of popular fame, laboured to increase and envenom the national frenzy, some by dazzling the people with projects of confiscation, others, by exciting their jealousy of rank, and others, by alluring the uneducated pride of the mind, and playing before it theories of unlimited progress, and brilliant perfectibility. Those arts had nearly succeeded ; the soberness and sincerity of the national spirit were universally silenced for the time ; the haughty effrontery and contemptuous scoffing of the new school of freedom and philosophy, bore down all idea of resistance ; and the purer understanding of England seemed spell-bound, like Milton's noble Lady ;

“ In stony fetters fixt and motionless,”

while the shapes of this revolutionary revel were triumphing and glittering before her. But,

a more powerful presence was to come, and rebuke them ; a genius of a loftier rank, and borrowing its strength from sources above the cup of the enchanter, burst in, broke his wand, and turning the revellers into their true shapes of grossness and vice, freed the captive of the spell. This was the achievement of Burke, and none was ever more effective, or more essential to the peace of an empire.

It is in no affectation of public danger, that those who wish well to their country, now call on it, to prepare. The whole course of public measures, for the last seven years, has been *republican*. The changes of public men within that period have scarcely affected this strong tendency of things. If the feeble have given way, and the corrupt have only made the course more headlong ; the firmest helmsmen of the State have felt the current too strong for them, to return. Whether yielding, or resisting, every hour has brought us nearer the verge of that mighty cataract, of which we already hear the roar.

The Extracts from Burke's published works are made in an order illustrative of his personal feelings, his public career, and the national exigencies of his time. They are accompanied with notices of the events of his private life, chiefly from his Biography by Mr Prior; and with remarks connected with the circumstances of the anxious period in which we live; the whole forming an anti-revolutionary **MANUAL** of the wisdom of the wisest of men.

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MEMOIR
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CHAPTER I.

**Value of Biography—Birth of Burke—Early Scenery—Education—
Fondness for Milton—Destined to the Bar—Arrival in London—
Proposes to go to America—Attacks Bolingbroke—Johnson's praise
of Burke—Earl of Charlemont—Connexion with Single-Speech
Hamilton.**

THE people of England are attached to liberty, and they are made for it. They have, by nature, a gravity of mind, which tends to save them from political rashness. They have a manliness which repels dishonourable submission to force. Thus, superior by their original temperament, alike to the extravagances of democracy, and to the severities of despotism, they alone, of all European nations, have been qualified to build up that last and noblest labour of utility and virtue, a free Constitution.

Yet while nations are composed of men, they must be liable to error. Opinion must exhibit those currents and changes which defy, or astonish, the wisdom

of the wise. Strong temptations to hasty aggrandizement, or rash terrors of public loss, must try the practical knowledge of the state; and England, with all her experience, vigour, and virtue, must take her share in those contingencies which compel nations to revert to first principles, and refresh their declining years by draughts from the original fountains of their fame. It is for such purposes that the lover of his country peculiarly values history. He opens the door of that great repository of the crime and frailties, of the genius and power, of ages which have gone down to the grave; less to gaze on them as curious specimens of the past, than as true instructors of the present. He sees in their configuration the secrets of the living frame, the sources of actual public strength, the organs of national renown, the fine impulses which give activity and force to the whole animated system of Empire.

But the most effectual portion of history is that which gives down great men to the future; for it furnishes the mind of the rising generation with a model on which it can shape itself at once. The embodied virtue of the champion of truth and freedom there stands before us; the progress of ability and learning, of generous ambition and faithful principle, is displayed to the eye in all its successions; there is nothing ideal, nothing to be made up by fancy, or left to chance. The standard of excellence is palpable to the touch; and men can scarcely look upon this illustrious evidence of human capabilities, without unconsciously emulating its labours, and sharing its superiority.

In giving a rapid view of the life of the celebrated

BURKE, these pages are less anxious to render the due tribute to his talents, than to his principles. His genius has long gained for itself the highest prize of fame. In an age eminent for intellectual distinction, Burke vindicated to himself the admiration of Europe. Owing nothing of his celebrity to birth, opulence, or official rank, he required none of those adventitious supports, to rise and move at ease in the highest regions of public effect, dignity, and renown. There was no fear that his plumage would give way in either the storm or the sunshine; those are the casualties of inferior powers. He had his share of both, the tempest, and that still more perilous trial, which has melted down the virtue of so many aspiring spirits in the favour of cabinets. But Burke grew purer, and more powerful for good, to his latest moment; he constantly rose more and more above the influence of party, until at last the politician was elevated into the philosopher; and in that loftier atmosphere, from which he looked down on the cloudy and turbulent contests of the time, he soared upward calmly in the light of truth, and became more splendid at every wave of his wing.

This is no exaggeration of his singular ability, or of its course. Of all the memorable men of his day, Burke is the only orator, whose eloquence has been incorporated into the wisdom of his country. His great contemporaries grappled triumphantly with the emergencies of the hour, and having achieved the exploit of the hour, were content with what they had done. But it is palpable, that Burke in every instance

contemplated a larger victory ; that his struggle was not more to meet a contingency, than to establish a principle ; that he was not content with overwhelming the adversary of the moment, but must bequeath with that triumph some new knowledge of the means by which the adversary might be overwhelmed in every age to come—some noble contribution to that grand tactic by which men and nations are armed and marshalled against all difficulty. The labours of his contemporaries were admirable ; the mere muscular force of the human mind never exhibited more prodigious feats, than in the political contests of the days of Chatham, Holland, Pitt and Fox. The whole period from the fall of the Walpole Ministry to the death of Pitt, was an unrelaxing struggle of the most practised, expert, and vivid ability. But it was the struggle of the arena—a great rivalry for the prize of the people—the fierce and temporary effort of great intellectual gladiators. When they were exhausted, or perished, others followed, if with inferior powers, with close imitation. But no man has followed Burke. No defender of the truth has ever exhibited that fine combination of practical vigour with essential wisdom ; that mastery of human topics with that diviner energy which overthrew not merely the revolutionary spirit of his day, but enables us to maintain the conflict against all its efforts to come ;—like the conqueror of the Python, leaving his own image to all time, an emblem of matchless grace and grandeur, to ages when the enemy and the era alike are no more.

PITT - WILLIAM.
Born 1759. Died 1806.

My Dear Duke

You will, I am sure, have the
goodness to admit Parliamentary Engagements as
an excuse for my not having thanked you for your
Letter instantly as I wish'd. The favour of the Dea
you have received of my first attempt, I must
attribute to a Partial Reporter, and what is
yet more, a willing hearer. - If however it has
been in any degree successful; what effect should
it have but to revive and increase if possible my
sense of that Friendship, ~~to~~ which has enabled
me to pursue the favorite Object of my mind?
I cannot deceive myself with the thought of
any thing which belates to me, being to penetrate
as you say, the obscurity of Retirement, but
much less can I bring myself to think of that
Retirement as applied to your Grace. Let me
rather hope that I shall have the satisfaction of
fighting under your Banner in the cause to which
we are alike attached, and of proving to the world
how much I know the value, and feel the Honor
of

of such a connection. I mean to leave Town
on Wednesday, if no particular Business arises,
in order to join the Circuit. On my return I hope
I shall have the pleasure of seeing you in Town.

My Brother is probably with you by this time.
It is necessary for the Peace of his Conscience to inform
him that the loss of a Vote was not felt yesterday
as I expected, the Contractor's Bill not having been
opposed. - I flatter myself the Time may soon come
when one Vote may be of more consequence, as I
think there is a great Appearance of increasing Vigor,
and I do not despair of being summoned from the
Lands End to make Part of a Majority, before the
Circuit is over. May I beg my best Respects to
the Duchess.

Now, with the truest Attachment,
Truly Yours
W. Pitt

Lincoln Friday. March 9th

To His Grace The Duke of Rutland.
&c. &c. &c.

(Collection of His Grace the Duke of Rutland - Volume 10)

Edmund Burke, like most of those men who have made themselves memorable by their public services, was of humble extraction; the son of an Irish attorney, Yet, as Ireland is the land of genealogies, and every man who cares for the honours of ancestry, may indulge himself at large among the wide obscurity of the Irish lineages, Burke's biographers have gratified their zeal by searching for his origin among the De Burghs or Burgos, whose names are found in the list of Strongbow's knights in the invasion under Henry the Second. Edmund Burke justly seems to have thought little upon the subject, and contenting himself with being a son of Adam, prepared to lay the foundations of a fame independent of the Norman. He was born in Dublin, January 1, 1730, old style; of a delicate constitution, which in his boyhood he rendered still more delicate by a love of reading. Being threatened with consumption, he was removed at an early age from the air of the capital to the house of his grandfather at Castletown Roche, a village in the county of Cork, in the neighbourhood of the old castle of Kilcolman, once the residence of the poet Spenser, and seated in the centre of a district alike remarkable for traditional interest, and landscape beauty. Early associations often have a powerful effect on the mind; and it is not improbable that the rich and lovely scenery of this spot had some share in storing up those treasures of brightness and beauty, that love for solemn and lofty thoughts, which characterised in subsequent life the spirit of this extraordinary man.

From wandering among the hills and streams of this romantic country, of which the acknowledged picture still lives in the "Fairy Queen," Burke was transferred in his twelfth year to a school, kept by an intelligent Quaker at Ballytore, between twenty and thirty miles from Dublin. The opinion then formed of him was not unlike that which we might conceive from his later career. He was said to be fond of acquiring great diversity of knowledge, to have evinced a remarkable quickness of apprehension, and delighted in the display of memory. He read many of the old romances of chivalry, and much history and poetry. His habits were almost solitary, but he was gentle, good-natured, and willing to assist and oblige. In a debate, in 1780, after the riots, Burke adverted to his education under the roof of the quaker, Abraham Shackleton. "I have been educated," said he, "as a Protestant of the Church of England, by a *dissenter*, who was an honour to his sect, though that sect was considered one of the purest. Under his eye I have read the Bible, morning, noon, and night, and have ever since been the happier and better man for such reading. I afterwards turned my attention to the reading of all the theological publications on all sides, which were written with such wonderful ability in the last and present centuries. But, finding at length that such studies tended to confound and bewilder rather than enlighten, I dropped them, embracing and holding fast a firm faith in the Church of England."

Burke was sent to the Dublin University in 1743.



ROBERT EARL of ORFORD.

There he acquired no particular distinction. In his third year he became "a scholar of the house," an honour then obtained without much difficulty, after an examination in the classical course of the College; and probably also one of the premiums at the general examinations of the students. On the whole, he appears to have been either indolent, or adverse to the course of reading pursued in the Irish University. Goldsmith speaks of him as an idler; which may have been true, in the sense of a taste for desultory reading. Leland, then one of the tutors, always admitted that he displayed cleverness, but, "from his retired habits, was unlikely to solicit public distinction!" The evident fact, on all authorities, is; that while in College, he was a literary loungeur, satisfied with going through the routine of the required exercises, but enjoying himself only over novels and newspapers, plays and travels, and the general miscellaneous publications of the day; a style of reading which nothing but the painful exertions of many an after year, even with the most powerful faculties, can retrieve; but which utterly confuses and dilapidates inferior talents, generates all the trifling and much of the vice of society, and fills the professions with loungeurs for life. Let no man sanction his disregard of the efforts enjoined on him by his University, under the example of Burke; unless he can atone for his folly by the mind of Burke. And let no man look with negligence on the prospects opened out to manly and well-directed exertion in those noble Institutions, unless he is prepared to begin

life anew when he has passed their walls; to turn that career into a lottery which might have been a certainty; and to encounter that long period of toil and defeated hope, which must intervene before he can break through the barriers of professional success, and pioneer his way through the rugged ascents and desolate bleaknesses that lie before even the most gifted and gallant adventurer.

Some slight records of Burke's literary predilections, at this period, remain. Shakspeare, Addison, Le Sage, Smollett, and Fielding, were his frequent perusal, as they were that of every man of his time. He praised Demosthenes as "the first of orators," declared Plutarch to be the "pleasantest reading in the whole range of Memoirs," preferred the Greek historians to the Latin, and was attracted by Horace, and enamoured of Virgil. So far there was nothing singular in his tastes. He thought as all the world has thought, for these two thousand years. But he also preferred Euripides, in all his tameness, to the simple vigour of Sophocles; professed his admiration of Lucretius, desultory and didactic as he is; and even ventured to speak of the *Æneid*, in all its dreary languor, perhaps the most inanimate poem that ever effused itself from the pen of a real poet, as "superior to the *Iliad*," of all the works of poetry, the most various, vigorous, and natural,—the model of living description, noble sentiment, and mingled strength and splendour of character. On those points he might assert his full claim to singularity. But those were the opinions of a boy, proud



T. Stanford Rapier

C. K. R. Co.

Millon, ~~Stanley~~ Stanley, Stanley Co.

and pleased with the first perception of deciding for himself, the first unfettered excursion into the wilderness of criticism. He afterwards grew wiser, as he grew calm.

But even in his immature age, he had largely formed the taste for which he was subsequently so distinguished. Milton's richness of language, boundless learning, and scriptural grandeur of conception, were the first and last themes of his applause. Young, from whose epigrammatic labour of expression, and clouded though daring fancy, modern taste shrinks, was a favourite in Burke's day; and Burke followed the public opinion, and satisfied himself that he was cultivating his mind by committing a large portion of the dreamy wanderings of the Night Thoughts to memory. He also wrote some translations of the Latin poets, and some original verses, which exhibiting his command of rhyme, exhibit nothing more.

Burke's profession was naturally marked out by that of his father. In Ireland, where no man is contented with his own rank, the son of a thriving attorney is universally designed for the bar. Burke put his name on the list of the future dispensers of justice in that country of lawyers. But, by the custom of the time, he also entered himself of the Middle Temple; a measure now unnecessary for the call to the Irish bar, but still generally adopted, from its advantages in acquainting the student with the habits of the English bar, and in allowing the advocate to transfer himself to English practice whenever circumstances may in-

duce him to leave the Irish Courts for Westminster Hall. Burke arrived in London in 1750. It is remarkable, that he had already, in some degree, formed the political views which characterised the most eminent period of his life; thus the features of his mind, like those of the countenance, in age, returned only to their first expression, and shewed that his politics were his nature. While but a student in the University, he had been roused, by his indignation at fictitious patriotism, to write a pamphlet against Brooke, the author of that much-praised, but infinitely childish romance, the Fool of Quality, who aspired to the name of a popular champion, on the credit of having composed an insolent and absurd tragedy. His second tribute to good order was a letter to Dr Lucas, a man who bustled himself into importance with the mob of the Irish metropolis; and after a life of clamour, faction, and persevering folly; of the demand of rights that were worth nothing, and the complaint of wrongs that existed only in his own brain; died in the odour of rabble sanctity, leaving his debts and his family as his bequest to popular benefaction.

The observant spirit, and philosophical turn of Burke's early mind, are evinced in a correspondence which he held with an Irish friend. He remarks, on his passage to the metropolis—"The prospects could not fail to attract the attention of the most indifferent; country seats sprinkled round me on every side, some in the modern taste, some in the style of old De Coverley Hall, all smiling on the neat but humble cottage:

every village as neat and compact as a bee-hive, resounding with the busy hum of industry; and inns like palaces."

He then sketches the mighty City, intelligently, yet with the ambitious and antithetical touch of clever inexperience—"the buildings are very fine; it may be called the Pink of Vice; but its hospitals and charitable institutions, whose turrets pierce the skies, like so many *electrical conductors*, avert the wrath of Heaven. Its inhabitants may be divided into two classes, the undoers and the undone! An Englishman is cold and distant at first; he is cautious even in forming an acquaintance: he must know you well before he enters into friendship with you; but if he does, he is not the first to dissolve the sacred bond; in short, a real Englishman is one who performs more than he promises; in company, he is rather silent; extremely prudent in his expressions, even in politics, his favourite topic. The women are not quite so reserved, they consult their glasses to the best advantage, and as nature is very liberal in her gifts to their persons, and even to their minds, it is not easy for a young man to escape their glances, or to shut his ears to their softly flowing accents.

"As to the state of learning in this city, you know I have not been long enough in it to form a proper judgment of the subject. I don't think, however, there is as much respect paid to a man of letters on this side of the water, as you imagine. I don't find that genius, the 'rath primrose, that forsaken dies,' is patronised

by any of the nobility. So that writers of the first talents are left to the capricious patronage of the public."

All this is like the letter of any other lively observer. But the passage which follows, fantastic as it is, is the property of Burke. "Notwithstanding discouragement, literature is cultivated in a high degree—Poetry raises her enchanting voice to heaven—History arrests the wings of time in his flight to the gulf of oblivion—Philosophy, the queen of arts, and the daughter of Heaven, is daily extending her intellectual empire—Fancy sports on airy wing, like a meteor on the bosom of a summer cloud—and even Metaphysics spins her cobwebs and catches *some flies*." His judgment of that great scene, in which he was so early, and so long to be, distinguished, is curious. "The House of Commons not unfrequently exhibits explosions of eloquence, that rise superior to those of Greece and Rome, even in their proudest days. Yet, after all, a man will make more by the figures of arithmetic than the figures of rhetoric, unless he can get into the trade wind, and then he may sail secure over the Pactolean sands."

He then touches on the stage; which, like every worshipper of the traditional excellence of the drama, he concludes to have fallen off utterly from its original merits; a complaint renewed in every succeeding age, and probably with much the same forgetfulness of the true state of the former. We are to remember, too, that Burke's lamentation was in the days of Garrick,



Engraved by E. Scriven from a Bust by P. Tenerelli

Arthur Murphy. Esq.

Barry, Mrs Yates, and a whole galaxy of first-rate performers; sustained by the activity, if not the genius, of such dramatists as Murphy, the elder Colman, Farquhar, and a long list of ingenious men, who kept the theatres in continued exertion, and whose labours, in not a few instances, still survive for the pleasure and interest of posterity. "As for the stage, it is sunk, in my opinion, to the lowest degree; I mean with regard to the trash that is exhibited on it. But I don't attribute this to the taste of the audience, for when Shakspeare warbles his native wood-notes, the boxes, pit, and gallery are crowded, and the gods are true to every word, if properly winged to the heart." The whole letter is a striking picture of his feelings, on the subjects most impressive to a young and susceptible mind. "Soon after my arrival in town, I visited Westminster Abbey. The moment I entered, I felt a kind of awe pervade my mind, which I cannot describe; the very silence seemed sacred. * * * Some would imagine that all those monuments were so many monuments of folly. I don't think so. What useful lessons of morality and sound philosophy do they not exhibit! When the high-born beauty surveys her face in the polished Parian, though dumb the marble, yet it tells her that it was placed to guard the remains of as fine a form, and as fair a face as her own. They shew, besides, how anxious we are to extend our loves and friendships beyond the grave, and to snatch as much as we can from oblivion, such is our natural love of immortality. But it is here that letters obtain their

noblest triumph ; it is here that the swarthy daughters of Cadmus may hang their trophies on high. For when all the pride of the chisel, and the pomp of heraldry, yield to the silent touches of time, a single line, a half-worn out inscription, remain faithful to their trust. Blest be the man who first introduced these strangers into our islands, and may they never want protection or merit. I have not the least doubt, that the finest poem in the English language, I mean Milton's *Il Penseroso*, was composed in the long resounding aisle of a mouldering cloister or ivy'd abbey. Yet, after all, do you know that I would rather sleep in the southern corner of a little country churchyard, than in the tomb of the Capulets ? I should like, however, that my dust should mingle with kindred dust. The good old expression, ' family burying-ground,' has something pleasing in it, at least to me."

At this period he appears to have spent some time in rambling through England, for his recovery from a tendency to consumption ; and to have lingered away the rest of his hours in desultory reading. He thus passed, or perhaps wasted, the years from 1750 to 1753. But such a mind must have had many misgivings in such a course, and he was at length stimulated to effort, by the vacancy of the Professorship of logic in Glasgow. The founder, or the earliest ornament, of the metaphysical school of Scotland, was an Irishman, Francis Hutcheson. This circumstance might have appeared to Burke as offering some encouragement to an attempt, whose immediate motives,

whether want of money, or want of occupation, must now be sought for in vain. The attempt itself has been disputed; but it is fully established by evidence, that in 1752, or 1753, he was a candidate for the chair of Logic in Glasgow; fortunately for his own renown, and the reverse for that of the electors and the college, he was an unsuccessful one. His triumphant rival was a name, whose laurels seem to have been limited to Glasgow, a Mr James Clow.

He had already given up the bar; whether through ill health, disinclination to the severe restrictions of its first steps, or the miscellaneous style of life and study which had become favourite and familiar with him. He supped and talked at the Grecian Coffee-house, then the evening resource of all the clever idlers of the Inns of Court. He was asked to dinner by Garrick, then delighting all the world, and whose civilities must have been highly flattering to an obscure Irish student. He made an occasional trial of his powers in old Macklin's Debating Society; and in the intervals of his leisure he is said to have employed himself in joining the general war of pamphlets against the Newcastle Administration.

But this rambling life must have been insufficient for the vigour of Burke's mind; it could scarcely have received much approbation from his judgment. The idea of shifting the scene altogether at length occurred to him; and the prospect of an appointment in America, seems to have engrossed him for a while. But his father's dislike to the idea of his looking for

fortune in lands so remote from Ireland, checked this cherished object ; and Burke, in a letter which begins with "Honoured sir," and expresses with his usual grace the feelings of a gentle and dutiful spirit, gave up the design.

He still lingered two years longer ; unknown, but not idle ; for at the end of three years, in 1756, he published his "Vindication of Natural Society," and his celebrated "Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful." The "Vindication" deserves praise for its authorship, panegyric for its intention. Bolingbroke had given from youth to age, the unhappy example of genius rendered useless, rank degraded, and opportunities thrown away. Gifted with powers which might have raised, or sustained, the fortunes of empire, his youth was distinguished only by systematic vice, his manhood by unprincipled ambition, and his age by callous infidelity. His life is yet to be written ; and it would form an unrivalled lesson to those who solicit worldly distinction by giving popularity to crime. It would show the profligate statesman defeated in all his objects, and the still more profligate champion of unbelief alike stung by the censures and the neglect of wiser mankind. Burke's would have been the pen to have done justice to such a subject. We should have seen his fine sagacity detecting the courtly insidiousness, the smiling hostility, and the inveterate malice of the enemy alike of government and religion. His heart would have taught him to brand the sullen rage of the infidel, his loyalty to expose the restless disaffection of the rebel,

and his sense of virtue to scourge the impurity of the man of the passions. Burke's singular knowledge of past public transactions, and his personal experience of the life of statesmen, would have given the force of maxims to his conclusions ; and in the punishment of this showy impostor, we should have had the most eloquent, majestic, and instructive of all lessons to the rising mind of nations.

The "Vindication" was an attack, less on Bolingbroke's Jacobite politics, than on his irreligion. A gross and pernicious scorn of all the truths which man should hold sacred, had been the fashion of the age. It had been generated among the misty metaphysics of Germany, and rapidly swelled to its full growth in the public and personal licentiousness of the court of France. From France, England, disdaining to borrow the meanest implement for the meanest uses of life, had stooped to borrow the favourite notions of party in the State, and in the Church. Bolingbroke, exiled for his political intrigues, filled up the dreariness of his solitude by copying French infidelity ; and paid his debt of gratitude to England by preparing the poisons of Berlin and Paris for the lips of his countrymen. It was to the honour of Burke, that, in his youth, and in the midst of a general delusion of all who constituted the leaders of public taste, he should sacredly discern where the truth lay, and manfully came forth armed in its cause. His process was unanswerable. Nominally adopting the tenets of Bolingbroke, he pushed them on to practical absurdity. Applying to society

the modes of argument which the infidel had applied to religion, he showed that they justified absurdities against which common sense revolts, and crimes against which the common safety arms itself; that the plea which might serve to overthrow Christianity, would be equally forcible against the existence of order; and that the perfection of the infidel system would reason mankind into the uselessness of a Monarchy, as rapidly as into the burden of a Revelation.

In a passage, which seems to come glowing from the pen of Bolingbroke in his hour of triumph, his young antagonist thus happily at once seizes on the sounding amplification of his style, and ridicules the philosophical folly of his argument:

“ In looking over any state, to form a judgment on it, it presents itself in two lights, the external and the internal. The first, that relation which it bears in point of enmity or friendship to other states. The second, that relation which its component parts, the governors and the governed, bear to each other. * * * * The glaring side of all national history is enmity. The only actions on which we have seen, and always will see all of them intent, are such as tend to the destruction of one another. ‘ War,’ says Machiavel, ‘ ought to be the only study of a prince;’ and by a prince he means every sort of state, however constituted. ‘ He ought,’ says this great political doctor, ‘ to consider peace only as a breathing-time, which gives him leisure to contrive, and furnishes ability to execute military plans.’ A meditation on the conduct of political

societies made old Hobbes imagine that war was the state of nature ; and truly, if a man judged of the individuals of our race by their conduct when united and packed into nations and kingdoms, he might imagine that every sort of virtue was foreign and unnatural to the mind of man.

“ The first accounts which we have of mankind are but so many accounts of their butcheries. All empires have been cemented in blood ; and in these early ages, when the race of mankind began first to form themselves into parties and combinations, the first effects of the combination, and indeed the end for which it seems purposely formed and best calculated, was their mutual destruction. All ancient history is dark and uncertain. One thing, however, is clear: There were conquerors and conquests in those days, and consequently all that devastation by which they are formed, and all that oppression by which they are maintained. We know little of Sesostris, but that he led out of Egypt an army of above 700,000 men ; that he overran the Mediterranean coast as far as Colchis ; that in some places he met but little resistance, and of course shed not a great deal of blood, but that he found in others a people who knew the value of their liberties, and sold them dear. Whoever considers the army which this conqueror headed, the space he traversed, and the opposition he frequently met, with the natural accidents of sickness, and the dearth and badness of provision to which he must have been subject in the variety of climates and countries his march lay through

—if he knows any thing, he must know that even the conqueror's army must have suffered greatly. It will be far from excess to suppose that one-half was lost in the expedition. If this was the state of the victorious the vanquished must have had a much heavier loss, as the greatest slaughter is always in the flight; and great carnage did in those times and countries ever attend the first rage of conquest. It will therefore be very reasonable to allow on their account as much as, added to the losses of the conquerors, may amount to a million of deaths. And then we shall see this conqueror, the oldest whom we have on record, opening the scene by the destruction of at least one million of his species, unprovoked but by his ambition, without any motives but pride, cruelty, and madness, and without any benefit to himself, (for Justin expressly tell us he did not maintain his conquest,) but solely to make so many people in so distant countries feel experimentally how severe a scourge Providence intends for the human race, when it gives one man the power over many, and arms his naturally impotent and feeble rage with the hands of millions, who know no common principle of action, but a blind obedience to the passions of their ruler."

Thus pursuing his way through ancient history, and still designating it as one common display of misery and massacre; the whole resulting from the facts that society exists, and that it has rulers at its head; he comes to the scene which Europe exhibited on the fall of the great tyrant dynasty of Rome. "There have

been periods when no less than universal destruction to the race of mankind seems to have been threatened. Such was that, when the Goths, the Vandals, and the Huns, poured into Gaul, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Africa, carrying destruction with them as they advanced, and leaving horrid deserts everywhere behind them. ‘*Vastum ubique silentium, secreti colles, fumantia procul tecta, nemo exploratoribus obviis,*’ is what Tacitus calls ‘*facies victoriæ.*’ It was always so ; but here it was emphatically so. From the north proceeded the swarms of Goths, Vandals, Huns, Ostrogoths, who ran towards the south into Africa itself, which suffered as all to the north had done. About this time, another torrent of barbarians, animated by the same fury, and encouraged by the same success, poured out of the south, and ravaged all to the north-east and west, to the remotest parts of Persia on one hand, and to the banks of the Loire on the other, destroying all the proud and curious monuments of human art, that not even the memory of the former inhabitants might survive. * * * * I shall only, in one word, mention the horrid effects of bigotry and avarice in the conquest of Spanish America ; a conquest, on a low estimation, effected by the murder of ten millions of the species. * * * * I need not enlarge on the torrents of silent and inglorious blood which have glutted the thirsty sands of Afric, or discoloured the polar snow, or fed the savage forests of America for so many ages of continual war. * * * * I go upon a naked and moderate calculation, just enough,

without a pedantical exactness, to give your lordship some feeling of the effects of political society. I charge the whole of those effects upon *political society*. The numbers I particularized amount to about thirty-six millions. * * * * In a state of nature, it had been impossible to find a number of men sufficient for such slaughters, agreed in the same bloody purpose. Society and politics, which have given us such destructive views, have given us also the means of satisfying them. * * * * How far mere nature would have carried us, we may judge by the example of those animals which still follow her laws, and even of those to which she has given dispositions more fierce, and arms more terrible than any ever she intended we should use. It is an incontestible truth, that there is more havoc made in one year by men of men, than has been made by all the lions, tigers, panthers, ounces, leopards, hyænas, rhinoceroses, elephants, bears, and wolves upon their several species, since the beginning of the world, though those agree ill enough with each other, and have a much greater proportion of rage and fury in their composition than we have. But with respect to you, ye legislators, ye civilizers of mankind, ye Orpheuses, Minoses, Solons, Theseuses, Lycurguses, Numas, your regulations have done more mischief in cold blood, than all the rage of the fiercest animals in their greatest terrors or furies has ever done, or ever could do."

He then, from a long and detailed examination of the chief provisions and orders of society, draws the

conclusion; that man is a loser by association with his kind, by government, by jurisprudence, by commerce, by every shape and step of civilisation! Of course, this conclusion revolts common sense; and the wildest disclaimer against religion will protest against thus sending man back to the forest, and stripping him of all the advantages of society, on account of the disadvantages. He will protest against arguing from the abuse of society in the rule of a certain number of violent men, to its vast, general, and beneficial uses to the infinite multitude. But the same protest is as directly applicable to the rejection of religion on account of the casual evils connected with its progress, the religious wars fomented by human passions, the corrupt practices of venal priests, the tyranny of jealous persecutors, the guilty artifice, or the blinding superstition. If the essential good is to be rejected for the sake of the accidental evil; civilisation must be cast away, as well as religion. But if the mighty stock of human good which religion bequeathes to mankind, the immeasurable consolations, the high motives, the pure guidance, the noble and perpetual stimulants reaching through all the depths of the human race, reaching too through them all undebased by human guilt, and maintaining the connexion of man in all his grades with Deity, are to weigh heavier in the balance than the mere human abuses of religion; then let us acknowledge that the infidel is not simply weak, but criminal; that he shuts his eyes against light for the love of dark-

ness, and that he is convicted of folly by all that remains to him of reason.

The concluding fragment of the essay is striking, as an evidence of the early period at which Burke had matured his pen. The style is no longer the fantastic and figurative declamation of Bolingbroke; it is Burke, as he stood before the world in the latest days of his triumph over the atheistic and revolutionary impulses of Europe; strong, yet dignified; energetic, yet clothed in the garb of that philosophic melancholy, which afterwards impressed his practical wisdom so powerfully upon the general heart.

He speaks in the person of Bolingbroke to a friend. "You are but just entering into the world. I am going out of it. I have played long enough to be heartily sick of the drama. Whether I have acted my part in it well or ill, posterity will judge with more candour than I, or than the present age, with our present passions, can possibly pretend to. For my part, I quit it without a sigh, and submit to the sovereign order without murmuring. The nearer we approach to the goal of life, the better we begin to understand the true value of our existence, and the real weight of our opinions. We set out, much in love with both, but we leave much behind us as we advance. But the passions which press our opinions are withdrawn, one after another, and the cool light of reason, at the setting of our life, shows us what a false splendour played upon those objects of our more sanguine seasons."

This tract is remarkable for its declaration of opi-

nions on the right side, when it was the pride of every man who pretended to literature, to stand on the wrong. But it is scarcely less remarkable, as actually forming the model of much of that revolutionary writing, which so recklessly laboured to inflame the popular passions, on the first burst of the French insurrection. Burke, in his virtuous ridicule, had involuntarily prepared an armoury for Paine in his profligate seriousness. The contemptuous flights of the great orator had pointed out the way for the Jacobin to ascend to the assault of all that we were accustomed to reverence and value. The burlesque charges of feeble government, misjudging law, ministerial weaknesses, and national prejudices, were eagerly adopted by the champions of overthrow, as irrefragable arguments against the altar and the throne; and Burke must have seen with surprise, or increased scorn, the arrows which he had shot out in sport, and for the mere trial of his boyish strength, gravely gathered up, and fitted to the Jacobin string, to be used against the noblest and most essential institutions of the empire.

The essay attracted considerable notice. Chesterfield and Warburton were said to have regarded it for a while as an authentic work of the infidel lord. The opinion prevailed so far; that Mallet, who, as the residuary legatee of his blasphemies, thought himself the legitimate defender of his fame, volunteered a public disclaimer on the subject; and the critics were thenceforth left to wonder on whose shoulders the mantle of the noble personage had fallen. Still Burke

was unheard of; but his second performance was destined to do justice to his ability. In the same year was published the *Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful*. No work of its period so suddenly sprang into popularity. The purity, vigour, and grace of its language, the clearness of its conceptions, and its bold soarings into the clouds of metaphysics, which, dark and confused as they had rendered all former theory, were by the flashes of Burke's fine imagination, turned into brightness and beauty, attracted universal praise. Its author was looked for among the leading veterans of literature. To the public astonishment, he was found to be an obscure student of twenty-six, utterly unknown, or known only as having attempted a canvass for a Scottish professorship, and having failed. He now began to be felt in society. The reputation of his book preceded him, and he gradually became on a footing of acquaintance, if not altogether of intimacy, with some of the more remarkable names connected with life and literature; the Earl of Bath, Markham, soon after Archbishop of York, Reynolds, Soame Jenyns, Lord Littleton, Warburton, Hume, and Johnson. This was a distinction which implied very striking merits in so young a man, unassisted by rank or opulence, and with the original sin of being an Irishman, a formidable disqualification in England fifty years ago. His treatise had been the pioneer to his storm of the sullen rampart of English formality. But, to have not only climbed there, but made good his lodgment, evidently implies personal merits of no ordinary kind.

To good-humoured and cordial manners, and singular extent and variety of knowledge, he added great force and elegance of conversation. Johnson's, even the fastidious Johnson's, opinion of him, is well known, as placing him already in the very highest rank of intellectual companionship.—“Burke, sir;” said he, “is an extraordinary man, his stream of talk is perpetual.” Another of his *dicta* was, “Burke's talk is the ebullition of his mind; he does not talk from a desire of distinction, but because his mind is full.”—“Burke is the *only man* whose common conversation corresponds with the general fame which he has in the world. Take up whatever topic you please, he is ready to meet you.” In another instance, where some one had been paying Johnson himself the tribute due to his memorable powers, he again gave the palm to his friend. “Burke, sir, is such a man, that if you meet him for the first time, in the street, where you were stopped by a drove of oxen, and you and he stepped aside for shelter but for five minutes, he'd talk to you in such a manner, that when you parted, you would say,—that is an extraordinary man. Now, Sir, you may be long enough with me, without finding any thing extraordinary.”

A portion of this fortunate quality must be attributed to his fondness for general study, and to the vigorous memory by which he retained all that he had acquired. But a much larger portion must be due to that exalted and glowing power of thought, that vivid mental seizure, by which all his knowledge became a

life; and a few years more of the natural toils which beset a man left to his own exertions for the support of a family, would probably have driven him to America, his old and favourite speculation against the frowns of fortune in Europe. At length the life for which he was made, the stirring and elevated interests of political and parliamentary distinction, appeared to open before him. He owed this change to an Irishman, the Earl of Charlemont.

Ireland still remembers the name of that estimable person with gratitude. A narrow fortune, and reluctant public abilities, did not prevent him from being a great public benefactor. He was the encourager of every plan for national advantage, the patron of literature, the head of the chief literary institution of Ireland, and of every other, tending to promote the good of the country. Though living much on the Continent, and in England, in early life, and long associated with all that was eminent in rank and talents in Great Britain, he generously and honestly fixed his residence on his native soil, turbulent as it was, remote from all the scenes congenial to his habits, and perplexed with furious party. For this determination, he seems to have had no other ground than a sense of duty. And he had his reward. No man in Ireland was ever revered with such unequivocal public honour. In all the warfare of party, no shaft ever struck his pure and lofty crest. Old connexions, and the custom of the time, which made every man of independent fortune enter public life on the side

of opposition, designated him a Whig. But no man less bowed to partisanship, no man more clearly washed the stains of faction from his hands, no man was further from the insanity of revolution. With gentle, but manly firmness, he repelled popularity; from the moment when it demanded his principles as its purchase. With generous, but indignant scorn, he raised up his voice equally against the insidious zeal which would substitute an affected love of country for patriotism; and the insurrectionary rage which would cast off the mild dominion of England, for the licence of democracy at home. He finally experienced the fate of all men of honour thrown into the midst of faction. His directness was a tacit reproach to its obliquity; as his simple honour was felt to be a libel on its ostentatious hypocrisy. He had been elected by public acclamation, to the command of the Irish Volunteers, a self-raised army of 100,000 men. He had conducted this powerful and perilous force through an anxious time, without collision with the government, or with the people. But, when French principles began to infest its ranks, he remonstrated; the remonstrance was retorted in a threat of the loss of his popularity; he embraced the alternative of a man of honour, and resigned. But the resignation was fatal to his threateners. When he laid the staff out of his hands, he laid down with it the credit of the Volunteers. They lost the national confidence from that moment. Rude and violent agitators first usurped the power, then divided it, and then quarrelled for the division. The glaring evil

of the bayonet drawn for political objects, startled the common sense of the country, and drove it to take refuge with the minister. The National army, which had been raised amid the shouts of the nation, was now cashiered by its universal outcry. The agitators went down among the common wrock; and, in the universal swell and uproar of the popular mind, the fame and virtues of the venerable commander of the Volunteers, alone floated undiminished to the shore.

But, if for one quality alone, the name of this nobleman ought to be held in memory. Perhaps no other public individual of his day extended such prompt and honourable protection to men of ability, in their advancement in the various ways of life. He had two boroughs at his command in the Irish House of Commons, and in all the venality which so daringly distinguished partisanship in that House, no one ever heard of the sale of the boroughs of Lord Charlemont. He applied his influence to the high-minded purpose of introducing men of talents into the Legislature.

An accidental intercourse with Burke, chiefly in consequence of the character which he derived from the treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful; induced this nobleman to serve his interests, by a connexion with the Secretary for Ireland, so well known by the name of single-speech Hamilton.

Hamilton's character is a problem to this hour. A single effort of eloquence had placed him among the hopes of the British senate. He never repeated it. Its reputation, and the friendship of Lord Halifax,

then President of the Board of Trade, made him a member of the Board in 1756. But Hamilton still continued silent. In four years after, he was made Secretary for Ireland, on the appointment of his noble friend as Lord Lieutenant. In the Irish House, the necessities of his situation, as Prime Minister of the Viceroyalty, overcame his nervousness, and he spoke, on several occasions, with effect. But, on his return to the English Parliament, his powers were again shut up; and, by a strange pusillanimity, a tenderness of oratorical repulse, unworthy of the member of an English public assembly; during the remainder of his life, his voice was never heard. Yet, probably no man led a more anxious and self-condemning life. During this period, public distinction, and distinction peculiarly by eloquence, seems to have never left his thoughts. He compiled, he wrote, he made common-places of rhetoric, he was perpetually preparing for the grand explosion, to which he was never to lay the train. He saw, and we may well suppose with what bitter stings to his vanity, the contemporaries whose talents he had scorned, hastening on in the path which he longed yet feared to tread, and snatching the laurels that had once hung down, soliciting his hand. He saw a new generation start up while he pondered, enter upon contests whose magnitude rendered all the past trivial, and display powers which throw the mere rhetorician hopelessly into the shade. Still he continued criticising, preparing for the great effort that was never to be made, and calculating on

the fame which he had already suffered finally to escape ; until he sank out of the remembrance of society, and dwindled into the grave. Literary history has seldom afforded an example of self-opinion so completely its own punisher ; his extravagant sense of the merit of a single effort, strangled every effort to come ; he was stifled in his own fame ; his vanity was suicidal.

With a superior of this order, jealous, anxious, and severe, it was impossible that Burke's open temperament, and gallant dependence on his own powers, should long cordially agree. At the end of two years, he suddenly abandoned the private secretaryship ; to which he declared that Hamilton, in the spirit of tyranny, had annexed degrading conditions ; and in 1763 returned indignantly to England, to take the chances of beginning the world again.



MARQUIS OF ROCKINGHAM