

JOHN LORD

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MIRABEAU

A.D. 1749-1791

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Three events of pre-eminent importance have occurred in our modern times; these are the Protestant Reformation, the American War of Independence, and the French Revolution.

The most complicated and varied of these great movements is the French Revolution, on which thousands of volumes have been written, so that it is impossible even to classify the leading events and the ever-changing features of that rapid and exciting movement. The first act of that great drama was the

attempt of reformers and patriots to destroy feudalism,—with its privileges and distinctions and injustices,—by unscrupulous and wild legislation, and to give a new constitution to the State.

The best representative of this movement was Mirabeau, and I accordingly select him as the subject of this lecture. I cannot describe the violence and anarchy which succeeded the Reign of Terror, ending in a Directory, and the usurpation of Napoleon. The subject is so vast that I must confine myself to a single point, in which, however, I would unfold the principles of the reformers and the logical results to which their principles led.

The remote causes of the French Revolution I have already glanced at, in a previous lecture. The most obvious of these, doubtless, was the misgovernment which began with Louis XIV. and continued so disgracefully under Louis XV.; which destroyed all reverence for the throne, even loyalty itself, the chief support of the monarchy. The next most powerful influence that created revolution was feudalism, which ground down the people by unequal laws, and irritated them by the haughtiness, insolence, and heartlessness of the aristocracy, and thus destroyed all respect for them, ending in bitter animosities. Closely connected with these two gigantic evils was the excessive taxation, which oppressed the nation and made it discontented and rebellious. The fourth most prominent cause of agitation was the writings of infidel philosophers and economists, whose unsound and sophistical theories held out fallacious hopes, and undermined those sentiments by which all governments and institutions are

preserved. These will be incidentally presented, as thereby we shall be able to trace the career of the remarkable man who controlled the National Assembly, and who applied the torch to the edifice whose horrid and fearful fires he would afterwards have suppressed. It is easy to destroy; it is difficult to reconstruct. Nor is there any human force which can arrest a national conflagration when once it is kindled: only on its ashes can a new structure arise, and this only after long and laborious efforts and humiliating disappointments.

It might have been possible for the Government to contend successfully with the various elements of discontent among the people, intoxicated with those abstract theories of rights which Rousseau had so eloquently defended, if it had possessed a strong head and the sinews of war. But Louis XVI., a modest, timid, temperate, moral young man of twenty-three, by the death of his father and elder brothers had succeeded to the throne of his dissolute grandfather at just the wrong time. He was a gentleman, but no ruler. He had no personal power, and the powers of his kingdom had been dissipated by his reckless predecessors. Not only was the army demoralized, and inclined to fraternize with the people, but there was no money to pay the troops or provide for the ordinary expenses of the Court. There was an alarming annual deficit, and the finances were utterly disordered. Successive ministers had exhausted all ordinary resources and the most ingenious forms of taxation. They made promises, and resorted to every kind of expediency, which

had only a temporary effect. The primal evils remained. The national treasury was empty. Calonne and Necker pursued each a different policy, and with the same results. The extravagance of the one and the economy of the other were alike fatal. Nobody would make sacrifices in a great national exigency. The nobles and the clergy adhered tenaciously to their privileges, and the Court would curtail none of its unnecessary expenses. Things went on from bad to worse, and the financiers were filled with alarm. National bankruptcy stared everybody in the face.

If the King had been a Richelieu, he would have dealt summarily with the nobles and rebellious mobs. He would have called to his aid the talents of the nation, appealed to its patriotism, compelled the Court to make sacrifices, and prevented the printing and circulation of seditious pamphlets. The Government should have allied itself with the people, granted their requests, and marched to victory under the name of patriotism. But Louis XVI. was weak, irresolute, vacillating, and uncertain. He was a worthy sort of man, with good intentions, and without the vices of his predecessors. But he was surrounded with incompetent ministers and bad advisers, who distrusted the people and had no sympathy with their wrongs. He would have made concessions, if his ministers had advised him. He was not ambitious, nor unpatriotic; he simply did not know what to do.

In his perplexity, he called together the principal heads of the nobility,—some hundred and twenty great seigneurs, called the Notables; but this assembly was dissolved without accomplishing

anything. It was full of jealousies, and evinced no patriotism. It would not part with its privileges or usurpations.

It was at this crisis that Mirabeau first appeared upon the stage, as a pamphleteer, writing bitter and envenomed attacks on the government, and exposing with scorching and unsparing sarcasms the evils of the day, especially in the department of finance. He laid bare to the eyes of the nation the sores of the body politic,—the accumulated evils of centuries. He exposed all the shams and lies to which ministers had resorted. He was terrible in the fierceness and eloquence of his assaults, and in the lucidity of his statements. Without being learned, he contrived to make use of the learning of others, and made it burn with the brilliancy of his powerful and original genius. Everybody read his various essays and tracts, and was filled with admiration. But his moral character was bad,—Was even execrable, and notoriously outrageous. He was kind-hearted and generous, made friends and used them. No woman, it is said, could resist his marvellous fascination,—all the more remarkable since his face was as ugly as that of Wilkes, and was marked by the small-pox. The excesses of his private life, and his ungovernable passions, made him distrusted by the Court and the Government. He was both hated and admired.

Mirabeau belonged to a noble family of very high rank in Provence, of Italian descent. His father, Marquis Mirabeau, was a man of liberal sentiments,—not unknown to literary fame by his treatises on political economy,—but was eccentric and violent.

Although his oldest son, Count Mirabeau, the subject of this lecture, was precocious intellectually, and very bright, so that the father was proud of him, he was yet so ungovernable and violent in his temper, and got into so many disgraceful scrapes, that the Marquis was compelled to discipline him severely,—all to no purpose, inasmuch as he was injudicious in his treatment, and ultimately cruel. He procured *lettres de cachet* from the King, and shut up his disobedient and debauched son in various state-prisons. But the Count generally contrived to escape, only to get into fresh difficulties; so that he became a wanderer and an exile, compelled to support himself by his pen.

Mirabeau was in Berlin, in a sort of semi-diplomatic position, when the Assembly of Notables was convened. His keen prescience and profound sagacity induced him to return to his distracted country, where he knew his services would soon be required. Though debauched, extravagant, and unscrupulous, he was not unpatriotic. He had an intense hatred of feudalism, and saw in its varied inequalities the chief source of the national calamities. His detestation of feudal injustices was intensified by his personal sufferings in the various castles where he had been confined by arbitrary power. At this period, the whole tendency of his writings was towards the destruction of the *ancien régime*. He breathed defiance, scorn, and hatred against the very class to which he belonged. He was a Catiline,—an aristocratic demagogue, revolutionary in his spirit and aims; so that he was mistrusted, feared, and detested by the ruling

powers, and by the aristocracy generally, while he was admired and flattered by the people, who were tolerant of his vices and imperious temper.

On the wretched failure of the Assembly of the Notables, the prime minister, Necker, advised the King to assemble the States-General,—the three orders of the State: the nobles, the clergy, and a representation of the people. It seemed to the Government impossible to proceed longer, amid universal distress and hopeless financial embarrassment, without the aid and advice of this body, which had not been summoned for one hundred and fifty years.

It became, of course, an object of ambition to Count Mirabeau to have a seat in this illustrious assembly. To secure this, he renounced his rank, became a plebeian, solicited the votes of the people, and was elected a deputy both from Marseilles and Aix. He chose Aix, and his great career began with the meeting of the States-General at Versailles, the 5th of May, 1789. It was composed of three hundred nobles, three hundred priests, and six hundred deputies of the third estate,—twelve hundred in all. It is generally conceded that these representatives of the three orders were on the whole a very respectable body of men, patriotic and incorruptible, but utterly deficient in political experience and in powers of debate. The deputies were largely composed of country lawyers, honest, but as conceited as they were inexperienced. The vanity of Frenchmen is so inordinate that nearly every man in the assembly felt quite competent to

govern the nation or frame a constitution. Enthusiasm and hope animated the whole assembly, and everybody saw in this States-General the inauguration of a glorious future.

One of the most brilliant and impressive chapters in Carlyle's "French Revolution"—that great prose poem—is devoted to the procession of the three orders from the church of St. Louis to the church of Notre Dame, to celebrate the Mass, parts of which I quote.

"Shouts rend the air; one shout, at which Grecian birds might drop dead. It is indeed a stately, solemn sight. The Elected of France and then the Court of France; they are marshalled, and march there, all in prescribed place and costume. Our Commons in plain black mantle and white cravat; Noblesse in gold-worked, bright-dyed cloaks of velvet, resplendent, rustling with laces, waving with plumes; the Clergy in rochet, alb, and other clerical insignia; lastly the King himself and household, in their brightest blaze of pomp,—their brightest and final one. Which of the six hundred individuals in plain white cravats that have come up to regenerate France might one guess would become their king? For a king or a leader they, as all bodies of men, must have. He with the thick locks, will it be? Through whose shaggy beetle-brows, and rough-hewn, seamed, carbuncled face, there look natural ugliness, small-pox, incontinence, bankruptcy,—and burning fire of genius? It is Gabriel Honoré Riquetti de Mirabeau; man-ruling deputy of Aix! Yes, that is the Type-Frenchman of this epoch; as Voltaire was of the last. He is French in his

aspirations, acquisitions, in his virtues and vices. Mark him well. The National Assembly were all different without that one; nay, he might say with old Despot,—The National Assembly? I am that.

"Now, if Mirabeau is the greatest of these six hundred, who may be the meanest? Shall we say that anxious, slight, ineffectual-looking man, under thirty, in spectacles, his eyes troubled, careful; with upturned face, snuffing dimly the uncertain future time; complexion of a multiplex atrabilious color, the final shade of which may be pale sea-green? That greenish-colored individual is an advocate of Arras; his name is Maximilien Robespierre.

"Between which extremes of grandest and meanest, so many grand and mean, roll on towards their several destinies in that procession. There is experienced Mounier, whose presidential parliamentary experience the stream of things shall soon leave stranded. A Pétion has left his gown and briefs at Chartres for a stormier sort of pleading. A Protestant-clerical St. Etienne, a slender young eloquent and vehement Barnave, will help to regenerate France,

"And then there is worthy Doctor Guillotin, Bailly likewise, time-honored historian of astronomy, and the Abbé Sieyès, cold, but elastic, wiry, instinct with the pride of logic, passionless, or with but one passion, that of self-conceit. This is the Sieyès who shall be system-builder, constitutional-builder-general, and build constitutions which shall unfortunately fall before we get

the scaffolding away.

"Among the nobles are Liancourt, and La Rochefoucauld, and pious Lally, and Lafayette, whom Mirabeau calls Grandison Cromwell, and the Viscount Mirabeau, called Barrel Mirabeau, on account of his rotundity, and the quantity of strong liquor he contains. Among the clergy is the Abbé Maury, who does not want for audacity, and the Curé Grégoire who shall be a bishop, and Talleyrand-Pericord, his reverence of Autun, with sardonic grimness, a man living in falsehood, and on falsehood, yet not wholly a false man.

"So, in stately procession, the elected of France pass on, some to honor, others to dishonor; not a few towards massacre, confusion, emigration, desperation."

For several weeks this famous States-General remain inactive, unable to agree whether they shall deliberate in a single hall or in three separate chambers. The deputies, of course, wish to deliberate in a single chamber, since they equal in number both the clergy and nobles, and some few nobles had joined them, and more than a hundred of the clergy. But a large majority of both the clergy and the noblesse insist with pertinacity on the three separate chambers, since, united, they would neutralize the third estate. If the deputies prevailed, they would inaugurate reforms to which the other orders would never consent.

Long did these different bodies of the States-General deliberate, and stormy were the debates. The nobles showed themselves haughty and dogmatical; the deputies showed

themselves aggressive and revolutionary. The King and the ministers looked on with impatience and disgust, but were irresolute. Had the King been a Cromwell, or a Napoleon, he would have dissolved the assemblies; but he was timid and hesitating. Necker, the prime minister, was for compromise; he would accept reforms, but only in a constitutional way.

The knot was at last cut by the Abbé Sieyès, a political priest, and one of the deputies for Paris,—the finest intellect in the body, next to Mirabeau, and at first more influential than he, since the Count was generally distrusted on account of his vices. Nor had he as yet exhibited his great powers. Sieyès said, for the Deputies alone, "We represent ninety-six per cent of the whole nation. The people is sovereign; we, therefore, as its representatives, constitute ourselves a national assembly." His motion was passed by acclamation, on June 17, and the Third Estate assumed the right to act for France.

In a legal and constitutional point of view, this was a usurpation, if ever there was one. "It was," says Von Sybel, the able German historian of the French Revolution, "a declaration of open war between arbitrary principles and existing rights." It was as if the House of Representatives in the United States, or the House of Commons in England, should declare themselves the representatives of the nation, ignoring the Senate or the House of Lords. Its logical sequence was revolution.

The prodigious importance of this step cannot be overrated. It transferred the powers of the monarchy to the Third Estate.

It would logically lead to other usurpations, the subversion of the throne, and the utter destruction of feudalism,—for this last was the aim of the reformers. Mirabeau himself at first shrank from this violent measure, but finally adopted it. He detested feudalism and the privileges of the clergy. He wanted radical reforms, but would have preferred to gain them in a constitutional way, like Pym, in the English Revolution. But if reforms could not be gained constitutionally, then he would accept revolution, as the lesser evil. Constitutionally, radical reforms were hopeless. The ministers and the King, doubtless, would have made some concessions, but not enough to satisfy the deputies. So these same deputies took the entire work of legislation into their own hands. They constituted themselves the sole representatives of the nation. The nobles and the clergy might indeed deliberate with them; they were not altogether ignored, but their interests and rights were to be disregarded. In that state of ferment and discontent which existed when the States-General was convened, the nobles and the clergy probably knew the spirit of the deputies, and therefore refused to sit with them. They knew, from the innumerable pamphlets and tracts which were issued from the press, that radical changes were desired, to which they themselves were opposed; and they had the moral support of the Government on their side.

The deputies of the Third Estate were bent on the destruction of feudalism, as the only way to remedy the national evils, which were so glaring and overwhelming. They probably knew that

their proceedings were unconstitutional and illegal, but thought that their acts would be sanctioned by their patriotic intentions. They were resolved to secure what seemed to them rights, and thought little of duties. If these inestimable and vital rights should be granted without usurpation, they would be satisfied; if not, then they would resort to usurpation. To them their course seemed to be dictated by the "higher law." What to them were legalities that perpetuated wrongs? The constitution was made for man, not man for the constitution.

Had the three orders deliberated together in one hall, although against precedent and legality, the course of revolution might have been directed into a different channel; or if an able and resolute king had been on the throne, he might have united with the people against the nobles, and secured all the reforms that were imperative, without invoking revolution; or he might have dispersed the deputies at the point of the bayonet, and raised taxes by arbitrary imposition, as able despots have ever done. We cannot penetrate the secrets of Providence. It may have been ordered in divine justice and wisdom that the French people should work out their own deliverance in their own way, in mistakes, in suffering, and in violence, and point the eternal moral that inexperience, vanity, and ignorance are fatal to sound legislation, and sure to lead to errors which prove disastrous; that national progress is incompatible with crime; that evils can only gradually be removed; that wickedness ends in violence.

A majority of the deputies meant well. They were earnest,

patriotic, and enthusiastic. But they knew nothing of the science of government or of constitution-making, which demand the highest maturity of experience and wisdom. As I have said, nearly four hundred of them were country lawyers, as conceited as they were inexperienced. Both Mirabeau and Sieyès had a supreme contempt for them as a whole. They wanted what they called rights, and were determined to get them any way they could, disregarding obstacles, disregarding forms and precedents. And they were backed up and urged forward by ignorant mobs, and wicked demagogues who hated the throne, the clergy, and the nobles. Hence the deputies made mistakes. They could see nothing better than unscrupulous destruction. And they did not know how to reconstruct. They were bewildered and embarrassed, and listened to the orators of the Palais Royal.

The first thing of note which occurred when they resolved to call themselves the National Assembly and not the Third Estate, which they were only, was done by Mirabeau. He ascended the tribune, when Brézé, the master of ceremonies, came with a message from the King for them to join the other orders, and said in his voice of melodious thunder, "We are here by the command of the people, and will only disperse by the force of bayonets." From that moment, till his death, he ruled the Assembly. The disconcerted messenger returned to his sovereign. What did the King say at this defiance of royal authority? Did he rise in wrath and indignation, and order his guards to disperse the rebels? No; the amiable King said meekly, "Well, let them remain

there." What a king for such stormy times! O shade of Richelieu, thy work has perished! Rousseau, a greater genius than thou wert, hath undermined the institutions and the despotism of two hundred years.

Only two courses were now open to the King,—this weak and kind-hearted Louis XVI., heir of a hundred years' misrule,—if he would maintain his power. One was to join the reformers and co-operate in patriotic work, assisted by progressive ministers, whatever opposition might be raised by nobles and priests; and the second was to arm himself and put down the deputies. But how could this weak-minded sovereign co-operate with plebeians against the orders which sustained his throne? And if he used violence, he inaugurated civil war, which would destroy thousands where revolution destroyed hundreds. Moreover, the example of Charles I. was before him. He dared not run the risk. In such a torrent of revolutionary forces, when even regular troops fraternized with citizens, that experiment was dangerous. And then he was tender-hearted, and shrank from shedding innocent blood. His queen, Marie Antoinette, the intrepid daughter of Maria Theresa, with her Austrian proclivities, would have kept him firm and sustained him by her courageous counsels; but her influence was neutralized by popular ministers. Necker, the prosperous banker, the fortunate financier, advised half measures. Had he conciliated Mirabeau, who led the Assembly, then even the throne might have been saved. But he detested and mistrusted the mighty tribune of the people,—the

aristocratic demagogue, who, in spite of his political rancor and incendiary tracts, was the only great statesman of the day. He refused the aid of the only man who could have staved off the violence of factions, and brought reason and talent to the support of reform and law.

At this period, after the triumph of the Third Estate,—now called the National Assembly,—and the paralysis of the Court, perplexed and uncertain whether or not to employ violence and disband the assembly by royal decree, a great agitation began among the people, not merely in Paris, but over the whole kingdom. There were meetings to promote insurrection, paid declaimers of human rights, speeches without end in the gardens of the Palais Royal, where Marat, Camille Desmoulins, and other popular orators harangued the excited crowds. There were insurrections at Versailles, which was filled with foreign soldiers. The French guards fraternized with the people whom they were to subdue. Necker in despair resigned, or was dismissed. None of the authorities could command obedience. The people were starving, and the bakers' shops were pillaged. The crowds broke open the prisons, and released many who had been summarily confined. Troops were poured into Paris, and the old Duke of Broglie, one of the heroes of the Seven Years' War, now war-minister, sought to overawe the city. The gun-shops were plundered, and the rabble armed themselves with whatever weapons they could lay their hands upon. The National Assembly decreed the formation of a national guard to quell

disturbances, and placed Lafayette at the head of it. Besenval, who commanded the royal troops, was forced to withdraw from the capital. The city was completely in the hands of the insurgents, who were driven hither and thither by every passion which can sway the human soul. Patriotic zeal blended with envy, hatred, malice, revenge, and avarice. The mob at last attacked the Bastille, a formidable fortress where state-prisoners were arbitrarily confined. In spite of moats and walls and guns, this gloomy monument of royal tyranny was easily taken, for it was manned by only about one hundred and forty men, and had as provisions only two sacks of flour. No aid could possibly come to the rescue. Resistance was impossible, in its unprepared state for defence, although its guns, if properly manned, might have demolished the whole Faubourg Saint-Antoine.

The news of the fall of this fortress came like a thunder-clap over Europe. It announced the reign of anarchy in France, and the helplessness of the King. On hearing of the fall of the Bastille, the King is said to have exclaimed to his courtiers, "It is a revolt, then." "Nay, sire," said the Duke of Liancourt, "it is a revolution." It was evident that even then the King did not comprehend the situation. But how few could comprehend it! Only one man saw the full tendency of things, and shuddered at the consequences,—and this man was Mirabeau.

The King, at last aroused, appeared in person in the National Assembly, and announced the withdrawal of the troops from Paris and the recall of Necker. But general mistrust was alive

in every bosom, and disorders still continued to a frightful extent, even in the provinces. "In Brittany the towns appointed new municipalities, and armed a civic guard from the royal magazines. In Caen the people stormed the citadel and killed the officers of the salt-tax. Nowhere were royal intendants seen. The custom-houses, at the gates of the provincial cities, were demolished. In Franche-Comté a noble castle was burned every day. All kinds of property were exposed to the most shameful robbery."

Then took place the emigration of the nobles, among whom were Condé, Polignac, Broglie, to organize resistance to the revolution which had already conquered the King.

Meanwhile, the triumphant Assembly, largely recruited by the liberal nobles and the clergy, continued its sessions, decreed its sittings permanent and its members inviolable. The sittings were stormy; for everybody made speeches, written or oral, yet few had any power of debate. Even Mirabeau himself, before whom all succumbed, was deficient in this talent. He could thunder; he could arouse or allay passions; he seemed able to grasp every subject, for he used other people's brains; he was an incarnation of eloquence,—but he could not reply to opponents with much effect, like Pitt, Webster, and Gladstone. He was still the leading man in the kingdom; all eyes were directed towards him; and no one could compete with him, not even Sieyès. The Assembly wasted days in foolish debates. It had begun its proceedings with the famous declaration of the rights of man,—an abstract

question, first mooted by Rousseau, and re-echoed by Jefferson. Mirabeau was appointed with a committee of five to draft the declaration,—in one sense, a puerile fiction, since men are not "born free," but in a state of dependence and weakness; nor "equal," either in regard to fortune, or talents, or virtue, or rank: but in another sense a great truth, so far as men are entitled by nature to equal privileges, and freedom of the person, and unrestricted liberty to get a living according to their choice.

The Assembly at last set itself in earnest to the work of legislation. In one night, the ever memorable 4th of August, it decreed the total abolition of feudalism. In one night it abolished tithes to the church, provincial privileges, feudal rights, serfdom, the law of primogeniture, seigniorial dues, and the *gabelle*, or tax on salt. Mirabeau was not present, being absent on his pleasures. These, however, seldom interfered with his labors, which were herculean, from seven in the morning till eleven at night. He had two sides to his character,—one exciting abhorrence and disgust, for his pleasures were miscellaneous and coarse; a man truly abandoned to the most violent passions: the other side pleasing, exciting admiration; a man with an enormous power of work, affable, dignified, with courtly manners, and enchanting conversation, making friends with everybody, out of real kindness of heart, because he really loved the people, and sought their highest good; a truly patriotic man, and as wise as he was enthusiastic. This great orator and statesman was outraged and alarmed at the indecent haste of the Assembly, and

stigmatized its proceedings as "nocturnal orgies." The Assembly on that memorable night swept away the whole feudal edifice, and in less time than the English Parliament would take to decide upon the first reading of any bill of importance.

The following day brought reflection and discontent. "That is just the character of our Frenchmen," exclaimed Mirabeau; "they are three months disputing about syllables, and in a single night they overturn the whole venerable edifice of the monarchy." Sieyès was equally disgusted, and made a speech of great force to show that to abolish tithes without an indemnity was spoliating the clergy to enrich the land-owners. He concluded, "You know how to be free; you do not know how to be just." But he was regarded as an ecclesiastic, unable to forego his personal interests. He gave vent to his irritated feelings in a conversation with Mirabeau, when the latter said, "My dear Abbé, you have let loose the bull, and you now complain that he gores you." It was this political priest who had made the first assault on the constitution, when he urged the Third Estate to decree itself the nation.

The National Assembly had destroyed feudal institutions; but it had not yet made a constitution, or restored order. Violence and anarchy still reigned. Then the clubs began to make themselves a power. "Come," said the lawyer Danton to a friend, in the district of the Cordeliers, "come and howl with us; you will earn much money, and you can still choose your party afterwards." But it was in the garden of the Palais Royal, and in the old church of the

Jacobins that the most violent attacks were made on all existing institutions. "A Fourth Estate (of able editors) also springs up, increases, multiplies; irrepressible, incalculable." Then from the lowest quarters of Paris surge up an insurrection of women, who march to Versailles in disorder, penetrate the Assembly, and invade the palace. On the 5th of October a mob joins them, of the lowest rabble, and succeed in forcing their way into the precincts of the palace. "The King to Paris!" was now the general cry, and Louis XVI. appears upon the balcony and announces by gestures his subjection to their will. A few hours after, the King is on his way to Paris, under the protection of the National Guard, really a prisoner in the hands of the people. In fourteen days the National Assembly also follows, to be now dictated to by the clubs.

In this state of anarchy and incipient violence, Mirabeau, whose power in the Assembly was still unimpaired, wished to halt. He foresaw the future. No man in France had such clear insight and sagacity as he. He saw the State drifting into dissolution, and put forth his hand and raised his voice to arrest the catastrophe which he lamented. "The mob of Paris," said he, "will scourge the corpses of the King and Queen." It was then that he gave but feeble support to the "Rights of Man," and contended for the unlimited veto of the King on the proceedings of the Assembly. He also brought forward a motion to allow the King's ministers to take part in the debates. "On the 7th of October he exhorted the Count de Marck to tell the King that his throne and kingdom were lost, if he did not immediately quit Paris."

And he did all he could to induce him, through the voice of his friends, to identify himself with the cause of reform, as the only means for the salvation of the throne. He warned him against fleeing to the frontier to join the emigrants, as the prelude of civil war. He advocated a new ministry, of more vigor and breadth. He wanted a government both popular and strong. He wished to retain the monarchy, but desired a constitutional monarchy like that of England. His hostility to all feudal institutions was intense, and he did not seek to have any of them restored. It was the abolition of feudal privileges which was really the permanent bequest of the French Revolution. They have never been revived. No succeeding government has even attempted to revive them.

On the removal of the National Assembly to Paris, Mirabeau took a large house and lived ostentatiously and at great expense until he died, from which it is supposed that he received pensions from England, Spain, and even the French Court. This is intimated by Dumont; and I think it probable. It will in part account for the conservative course he adopted to check the excesses of that revolution which he, more than any other man, invoked. He was doubtless patriotic, and uttered his warning protests with sincerity. Still it is easy to believe that so corrupt and extravagant a man in his private life was accessible to bribery. Such a man must have money, and he was willing to get it from any quarter. It is certain that he was regarded by the royal family, towards the close of his career, very differently from what they regarded him when the States-General was assembled.

But if he was paid by different courts, it is true that he then gave his support to the cause of law and constitutional liberty, and doubtless loathed the excesses which took place in the name of liberty. He was the only man who could have saved the monarchy, if it were possible to save it; but no human force could probably have arrested the waves of revolutionary frenzy at this time.

On the removal of the Assembly to Paris, the all-absorbing questions related to finance. The State was bankrupt. It was difficult to raise money for the most pressing exigencies. Money must be had, or there would be universal anarchy and despair. How could it be raised? The credit of the country was gone, and all means of taxation were exhausted. No man in France had such a horror of bankruptcy as Mirabeau, and his eloquence was never more convincing and commanding than in his finance speeches. Nobody could reply to him. The Assembly was completely subjugated by his commanding talents. Nor was his influence ever greater than when he supported Necker's proposal for a patriotic loan, a sort of income-tax, in a masterly speech which excited universal admiration. "Ah, Monsieur le Comte," said a great actor to him on that occasion, "what a speech: and with what an accent did you deliver it! You have surely missed your vocation."

But the finances were in a hopeless state. With credit gone, taxation exhausted, and a continually increasing floating debt, the situation was truly appalling to any statesman. It was at this

juncture that Talleyrand, a priest of noble birth, as able as he was unscrupulous, brought forth his famous measure for the spoliation of the Church, to which body he belonged, and to which he was a disgrace. Talleyrand, as Bishop of Autun, had been one of the original representatives of the clergy on the first convocation of the States-General; he had advocated combining with the Third Estate when they pronounced themselves the National Assembly, had himself joined the Assembly, attracted notice by his speeches, been appointed to draw up a constitution, taken active part in the declaration of Rights, and made himself generally conspicuous and efficient. At the present apparently hopeless financial crisis, Talleyrand uncovered a new source of revenue, claimed that the property of the Church belonged to the nation, and that as the nation was on the brink of financial ruin, this confiscation was a supreme necessity. The Church lands represented a value of two thousand millions of francs,—an immense sum, which, if sold, would relieve, it was supposed, the necessities of the State. Mirabeau, although he was no friend of the clergy, shrank from such a monstrous injustice, and said that such a wound as this would prove the most poisonous which the country had received. But such was the urgent need of money, that the Assembly on the 2d of November, 1789, decreed that the property of the Church should be put at the disposal of the State. On the 19th of December it was decreed that these lands should be sold. The clergy raised the most piteous cries of grief and indignation. Vainly did the bishops offer four hundred millions as

a gift to the nation. It was like the offer of Darius to Alexander, of one hundred thousand talents. "Your whole property is mine," said the conqueror; "your kingdom is mine."

So the offer of the bishops was rejected, and their whole property was taken. And it was taken under the sophistical plea that it belonged to the nation. It was really the gift of various benefactors in different ages to the Church, for pious purposes, and had been universally recognized as sacred. It was as sacred as any other rights of property. The spoliation was infinitely worse than the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII. He had some excuse, since they had become a scandal, had misused their wealth, and diverted it from the purposes originally intended. The only wholesale attack on property by the State which can be compared with it, was the abolition of slavery by a stroke of the pen in the American Rebellion. But this was a war measure, when the country was in most imminent peril; and it was also a moral measure in behalf of philanthropy. The spoliation of the clergy by the National Assembly was a great injustice, since it was not urged that the clergy had misused their wealth, or were neglectful of their duties, as the English monks were in the time of Henry VIII. This Church property had been held so sacred, that Louis XIV. in his greatest necessities never presumed to appropriate any part of it. The sophistry that it belonged to the nation, and therefore that the representatives of the nation had a right to take it, probably deceived nobody. It was necessary to give some excuse or reason for such a wholesale robbery, and this

was the best which could be invented. The simple truth was that money at this juncture was a supreme necessity to the State, and this spoliation seemed the easiest way to meet the public wants. Like most of the legislation of the Assembly, it was defended on the Jesuit plea of expediency,—that the end justifies the means, the plea of unscrupulous and wicked politicians in all countries.

And this expediency, doubtless, relieved the government for a time, for the government was in the hands of the Assembly. Royal authority was a mere shadow. In reality, the King was a prisoner, guarded by Lafayette, in the palace of the Tuileries. And the Assembly itself was now in fear of the people as represented by the clubs. There were two hundred Jacobin clubs in Paris and other cities at this time, howling their vituperations not only on royalty but also on everything else which was not already destroyed.

The Assembly having provided for the wants of the government by the confiscation of two thousand millions,—which, however, when sold, did not realize half that sum,—issued their *assignats*, or bonds representing parcels of land assigned to redeem them. These were mostly 100-franc notes, though there were also issues of ten and even five francs. The national credit was thus patched up by legislators who took a constitution in hand,—to quote Burke—"as savages would a looking-glass." Then they proceeded to other reforms, and abolished the parliaments, and instituted the election of judges by the people, thus stripping the King of his few remaining powers.

In the mean time Mirabeau died, worn out with labors and passions, and some say by poison. Even this Hercules could not resist the consequences of violated natural law. The Assembly decreed a magnificent public funeral, and buried him with great pomp. He was the first to be interred in the Pantheon. For nearly two years he was the leading man in France, and he retained his influence in the Assembly to the end. Nor did he lose his popularity with the people. It is not probable that his intrigues to save the monarchy were known, except to a few confidential friends. He died at the right time for his fame, in April, 1791. Had he lived, he could not have arrested the tide of revolutionary excesses and the reign of demagogues, and probably would have been one of the victims of the guillotine.

As an author Mirabeau does not rank high. His fame rests on his speeches. His eloquence was transcendent, so far as it was rendered vivid by passion. He knew how to move men; he understood human nature. No orator ever did so much by a single word, by felicitous expressions. In the tribune he was immovable. His self-possession never left him in the greatest disorders. He was always master of himself. His voice was full, manly, and sonorous, and pleased the ear; always powerful, yet flexible, it could be as distinctly heard when he lowered it as when he raised it. His knowledge was not remarkable, but he had an almost miraculous faculty of appropriating whatever he heard. He paid the greatest attention to his dress, and wore an enormous quantity of hair dressed in the fashion of the day. "When I

shake my terrible locks," said he, "no one dares interrupt me." Though he received pensions, he was too proud to be dishonest, in the ordinary sense. He received large sums, but died insolvent. He had, like most Frenchmen, an inordinate vanity, and loved incense from all ranks and conditions. Although he was the first to support the Assembly against the King, he was essentially in favor of monarchy, and maintained the necessity of the absolute veto. He would have given a constitution to his country as nearly resembling that of England as local circumstances would permit. Had he lived, the destinies of France might have been different.

But his death gave courage to all the factions, and violence and crime were consummated by the Reign of Terror. With the death of Mirabeau, closed the first epoch of the Revolution. Thus far it had been earnest, but unscrupulous in the violation of rights and in the destruction of ancient abuses. Yet if inexperienced and rash, it was not marked by deeds of blood. In this first form it was marked by enthusiasm and hope and patriotic zeal; not, as afterwards, by fears and cruelty and usurpations.

Henceforth, the Revolution took another turn. It was directed, not by men of genius, not by reformers seeking to rule by wisdom, but by demagogues and Jacobin clubs, and the mobs of the city of Paris. What was called the "Left," in the meetings of the Assembly,—made up of fanatics whom Mirabeau despised and detested,—gained a complete ascendancy and adopted the extremest measures. Under their guidance, the destruction of the monarchy was complete. Feudalism and the Church property had

been swept away, and the royal authority now received its final blow; nay, the King himself was slain, under the influence of fear, it is true, but accompanied by acts of cruelty and madness which shocked the whole civilized world and gave an eternal stain to the Revolution itself.

It was not now reform, but unscrupulous destruction and violence which marked the Assembly, controlled as it was by Jacobin orators and infidel demagogues. A frenzy seized the nation. It feared reactionary movements and the interference of foreign powers. When the Bastille had fallen, it was by the hands of half-starved people clamoring for bread; but when the monarchy was attacked, it was from sentiments of fear among those who had the direction of affairs. The King, at last, alarmed for his own safety, contrived to escape from the Tuileries, where he was virtually under arrest, for his power was gone; but he was recaptured, and brought back to Paris, a prisoner. Robespierre called upon the Assembly to bring the King and Queen to trial. Marat proposed a military dictatorship, to act more summarily, which proposal produced a temporary reaction in favor of royalty. Lafayette, as commander of the National Guard, declared, "If you kill the King to-day, I will place the Dauphin on the throne to-morrow." But the republican party, now in fear of a reaction, was increasing rapidly. Its leaders were at this time the Girondists, bent on the suppression of royalty, and headed by Brissot, who agitated France by his writings in favor of a republic, while Madame Roland opened her *salons* for

intrigues and cabals,—a bright woman, "who dreamed of Spartan severity, Roman virtue, and Plutarch heroes."

The National Assembly dissolved itself in September, and appealed to the country for the election of a National Convention; for, the King having been formally suspended Aug. 10, there was no government. The first act of the Convention was to proclaim the Republic. Then occurred the more complete organization of the Jacobin club, to control the National Convention; and this was followed by the rapid depreciation of the *assignats*, bread-riots, and all sorts of disturbances. Added to these evils, foreign governments were arming to suppress the Revolution, and war had been declared by the Girondist ministry, of which Dumouriez was war-minister. At this crisis, Danton, of the club of the Cordéliers, who found the Jacobins too respectable, became a power,—a coarse, vulgar man, but of indefatigable energy and activity, who wished to do away with all order and responsibility. He attacked the Gironde as not sufficiently violent.

It was now war between the different sections of the revolutionists themselves. Lafayette resolved to suppress the dangerous radicals by force, but found it no easy thing, for the Convention was controlled by men of violence, who filled the country with alarm, not of their unscrupulous measures, but of the military and of foreign enemies. He even narrowly escaped impeachment at the hands of the National Convention.

The Convention is now overawed and controlled by the

Commune and the clubs. Lafayette flies. The mob rules Paris. The revolutionary tribunal is decreed. Robespierre, Marat, and Danton form a triumvirate of power. The September massacres take place. The Girondists become conservative, and attempt to stay the progress of further excesses,—all to no purpose, for the King himself is now impeached, and the Jacobins control everything. The King is led to the bar of the Convention. He is condemned by a majority only of one, and immured in the Temple. On the 20th of January, 1793, he was condemned, and the next day he mounted the scaffold. "We have burned our ships," said Marat when the tragedy was consummated.

With the death of the King, I bring this lecture to a close. It would be interesting to speculate on what might have been averted, had Mirabeau lived. But probably nothing could have saved the monarchy except civil war, to which Louis XVI. was averse.

Nor can I dwell on the second part of the Revolution, when the government was in the hands of those fiends and fanatics who turned France into one vast slaughter-house of butchery and blood. I have only to say, that the same unseen hand which humiliated the nobles, impoverished the clergy, and destroyed the King, also visited with retribution those monsters who had a leading hand in the work of destruction. Marat, the infidel journalist, was stabbed by Charlotte Corday. Danton, the minister of justice and orator of the revolutionary clubs, was executed on the scaffold he had erected for so

many innocent men. Robespierre, the sentimental murderer and arch-conspirator, also expiated his crimes on the scaffold; as did Saint-Just, Lebas, Couthon, Henriot, and other legalized assassins. As the Girondists sacrificed the royal family, so did the Jacobins sacrifice the Girondists; and the Convention, filled with consternation, again sacrificed the Jacobins.

After the work of destruction was consummated, and there was nothing more to destroy, and starvation was imminent at Paris, and general detestation began to prevail, in view of the atrocities committed in the name of liberty, the crushing fact became apparent that the nations of Europe were arming to put down the Revolution and restore the monarchy. In a generous paroxysm of patriotism, the whole nation armed to resist the invaders and defend the ideas of the Revolution. The Convention also perceived, too late, that anything was better than anarchy and license. It put down the clubs, restored religious worship, destroyed the busts of the monsters who had disgraced their cause and country, intrusted supreme power to five Directors, able and patriotic, and dissolved itself.

Under the Directory, the third act of the drama of revolution opened with the gallant resistance which France made to the invaders of her soil and the enemies of her liberties. This resistance brought out the marvellous military genius of Napoleon, who intoxicated the nation by his victories, and who, in reward of his extraordinary services, was made First Consul, with dictatorial powers. The abuse of these powers, his

usurpation of imperial dignity, the wars into which he was drawn to maintain his ascendancy, and his final defeat at Waterloo, constitute the most brilliant chapter in the history of modern times. The Revolution was succeeded by military despotism. Inexperience led to fatal mistakes, and these mistakes made the strong government of a single man a necessity. The Revolution began in noble aspirations, but for lack of political wisdom and sound principles in religion and government, it ended in anarchy and crime, and was again followed by the tyranny of a monarch. This is the sequence of all revolutions which defy eternal justice and human experience. There are few evils which are absolutely unendurable, and permanent reforms are only obtained by patience and wisdom. Violence is ever succeeded by usurpation. The terrible wars through which France passed, to aggrandize an ambitious and selfish egotist, were attended with far greater evils than those which the nation sought to abolish when the States-General first met at Versailles.

But the experiment of liberty, though it failed, was not altogether thrown away. Lessons of political wisdom were learned, which no nation will ever forget. Some great rights of immense value were secured, and many grievous privileges passed away forever. Neither Louis XVIII., nor Charles X., nor Louis Philippe, nor Louis Napoleon, ever attempted to restore feudalism, or unequal privileges, or arbitrary taxation. The legislative power never again completely succumbed to the decrees of royal and imperial tyrants. The sovereignty of

the people was established as one of the fixed ideas of the nineteenth century, and the representatives of the people are now the supreme rulers of the land. A man can now rise in France above the condition in which he was born, and can aspire to any office and position which are bestowed on talents and genius. Bastilles and *lettres de cachet* have become an impossibility. Religious toleration is as free there as in England or the United States. Education is open to the poor, and is encouraged by the Government. Constitutional government seems to be established, under whatever name the executive may be called. France is again one of the most prosperous and contented countries of Europe; and the only great drawback to her national prosperity is that which also prevents other Continental powers from developing their resources,—the large standing army which she feels it imperative to sustain.

In view of the inexperience and fanaticism of the revolutionists, and the dreadful evils which took place after the fall of the monarchy, we should say that the Revolution was premature, and that substantial reforms might have been gained without violence. But this is a mere speculation. One thing we do know,—that the Revolution was a national uprising against injustice and oppression. When the torch is applied to a venerable edifice, we cannot determine the extent of the conflagration, or the course which it will take. The French Revolution was plainly one of the developments of a nation's progress. To conservative and reverential minds it was a horrid form for progress to take,

since it was visionary and infidel. But all nations are in the hands of God, who is above all second causes. And I know of no modern movement to which the words of Carlyle, when he was an optimist, when he wrote the most original and profound of his works, the "Sartor Resartus," apply with more force. "When the Phoenix is fanning her funeral pyre, will there not be sparks flying? Alas! some millions of men have been sucked into that high eddying flame, and like moths consumed. In the burning of the world-Phoenix, destruction and creation proceed together; and as the ashes of the old are blown about do new forces mysteriously spin themselves, and melodious death-songs are succeeded by more melodious birth-songs."

Yet all progress is slow, especially in government and morals. And how forcibly are we impressed, in surveying the varied phases of the French Revolution, that nothing but justice and right should guide men in their reforms; that robbery and injustice in the name of liberty and progress are still robbery and injustice, to be visited with righteous retribution; and that those rulers and legislators who cannot make passions and interests subservient to reason, are not fit for the work assigned to them. It is miserable hypocrisy and cant to talk of a revolutionary necessity for violating the first principles of human society. Ah! it is Reason, Intelligence, and Duty, calm as the voices of angels, soothing as the "music of the spheres," which alone should guide nations, in all crises and difficulties, to the attainment of those rights and privileges on which all true progress is based.

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EDMUND BURKE

A. D. 1729-1797

POLITICAL MORALITY

It would be difficult to select an example of a more lofty and irreproachable character among the great statesmen of England than Edmund Burke. He is not a puzzle, like Oliver Cromwell, although there are inconsistencies in the opinions he advanced from time to time. He takes very much the same place in the parliamentary history of his country as Cicero took in the Roman senate. Like that greatest of Roman orators and statesmen, Burke was upright, conscientious, conservative, religious, and profound. Like him, he lifted up his earnest voice against corruption in the government, against great state criminals, against demagogues, against rash innovations. Whatever diverse opinions may exist as to his political philosophy, there is only one opinion as to his character, which commands universal respect. Although he was the most conservative of statesmen, clinging to the Constitution, and to consecrated traditions and associations both in Church and State, still his name is associated with the most important

and salutary reforms which England made for half a century. He seems to have been sent to instruct and guide legislators in a venal and corrupt age. To my mind Burke looms up, after the lapse of a century, as a prodigy of thought and knowledge, devoted to the good of his country; an unselfish and disinterested patriot, as wise and sagacious as he was honest; a sage whose moral wisdom shines brighter and brighter, since it was based on the immutable principles of justice and morality. One can extract more profound and striking epigrams from his speeches and writings than from any prose writer that England has produced, if we except Francis Bacon. And these writings and speeches are still valued as among the most precious legacies of former generations; they form a thesaurus of political wisdom which statesmen can never exhaust. Burke has left an example which all statesmen will do well to follow. He was not a popular favorite, like Fox and Pitt; he was not born to greatness, like North and Newcastle; he was not liked by the king or the nobility; he was generally in the ranks of the opposition; he was a new man, like Cicero, in an aristocratic age,—yet he conquered by his genius the proudest prejudices; he fought his way upward, inch by inch; he was the founder of a new national policy, although it was bitterly opposed; and he died universally venerated for his integrity, wisdom, and foresight. He was the most remarkable man, on the whole, who has taken part in public affairs, from the Revolution to our times. Of course, the life and principles of so great a man are a study. If history has any interest or value, it is to show the

influence of such a man on his own age and the ages which have succeeded,—to point out his contribution to civilization.

Edmund Burke was born, 1730, of respectable parents in Ireland. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where he made a fair proficiency, but did not give promise of those rare powers which he afterwards exhibited. He was no prodigy, like Cicero, Pitt, and Macaulay. He early saw that his native country presented no adequate field for him, and turned his steps to London at the age of twenty, where he entered as a student of law in the Inner Temple,—since the Bar was then, what it was at Rome, what it still is in modern capitals, the usual resort of ambitious young men. But Burke did not like the law as a profession, and early dropped the study of it; not because he failed in industry, for he was the most plodding of students; not because he was deficient in the gift of speech, for he was a born orator; not because his mind repelled severe logical deductions, for he was the most philosophical of the great orators of his day,—not because the law was not a noble field for the exercise of the highest faculties of the mind, but probably because he was won by the superior fascinations of literature and philosophy. Bacon could unite the study of divine philosophy with professional labors as a lawyer, also with the duties of a legislator; but the instances are rare where men have united three distinct spheres, and gained equal distinction in all. Cicero did, and Bacon, and Lord Brougham; but not Erskine, nor Pitt, nor Canning. Even two spheres are as much as most distinguished men have filled,—

the law with politics, like Thurlow and Webster; or politics with literature, like Gladstone and Disraeli. Dr. Johnson, Garrick, and Reynolds, the early friends of Burke, filled only one sphere.

The early literary life of Burke was signalized by his essay on "The Sublime and Beautiful," original in its design and execution, a model of philosophical criticism, extorting the highest praises from Dugald Stewart and the Abbé Raynal, and attracting so much attention that it speedily became a text-book in the universities. Fortunately he was able to pursue literature, with the aid of a small patrimony (about £300 a year), without being doomed to the hard privations of Johnson, or the humiliating shifts of Goldsmith. He lived independently of patronage from the great,—the bitterest trial of the literati of the eighteenth century, which drove Cowper mad, and sent Rousseau to attics and solitudes,—so that, in his humble but pleasant home, with his young wife, with whom he lived amicably, he could see his friends, the great men of the age, and bestow an unostentatious charity, and maintain his literary rank and social respectability.

I have sometimes wondered why Burke did not pursue this quiet and beautiful life,—free from the turmoils of public contest, with leisure, and friends, and Nature, and truth,—and prepare treatises which would have been immortal, for he was equal to anything he attempted. But such was not to be. He was needed in the House of Commons, then composed chiefly of fox-hunting squires and younger sons of nobles (a body as ignorant as it was aristocratic),—the representatives

not of the people but of the landed proprietors, intent on aggrandizing their families at the expense of the nation,—and of fortunate merchants, manufacturers, and capitalists, in love with monopolies. Such an assembly needed at that day a schoolmaster, a teacher in the principles of political economy and political wisdom; a leader in reforming disgraceful abuses; a lecturer on public duties and public wrongs; a patriot who had other views than spoils and place; a man who saw the right, and was determined to uphold it whatever the number or power of his opponents. So Edmund Burke was sent among them,—ambitious doubtless, stern, intellectually proud, incorruptible, independent, not disdainful of honors and influence, but eager to render public services.

It has been the great ambition of Englishmen since the Revolution to enter Parliament, not merely for political influence, but also for social position. Only rich men, or members of great families, have found it easy to do so. To such men a pecuniary compensation is a small affair. Hence, members of Parliament have willingly served without pay, which custom has kept poor men of ability from aspiring to the position. It was not easy, even for such a man as Burke, to gain admission into this aristocratic assembly. He did not belong to a great family; he was only a man of genius, learning, and character. The squirearchy of that age cared no more for literary fame than the Roman aristocracy did for a poet or an actor. So Burke, ambitious and able as he was, must bide his time.

His first step in a political career was as private secretary to Gerard Hamilton, who was famous for having made but one speech, and who was chief secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, the Earl of Halifax. Burke soon resigned his situation in disgust, since he was not willing to be a mere political tool. But his singular abilities had attracted the attention of the prime minister, Lord Rockingham, who made him his private secretary, and secured his entrance into Parliament. Lord Verney, for a seat in the privy council, was induced to give him a "rotten borough."

Burke entered the House of Commons in 1765, at thirty-five years of age. He began his public life when the nation was ruled by the great Whig families, whose ancestors had fought the battles of reform in the times of Charles and James. This party had held power for seventy years, had forgotten the principles of the Revolution, and had become venal and selfish, dividing among its chiefs the spoils of office. It had become as absolute and unscrupulous as the old kings whom it had once dethroned. It was an oligarchy of a few powerful whig noblemen, whose rule was supreme in England. Burke joined this party, but afterwards deserted it, or rather broke it up, when he perceived its arbitrary character, and its disregard of the fundamental principles of the Constitution. He was able to do this after its unsuccessful attempt to coerce the American colonies.

American difficulties were the great issue of that day. The majority of the Parliament, both Lords and Commons,—sustained

by King George III., one of the most narrow-minded, obstinate, and stupid princes who ever reigned in England; who believed in an absolute jurisdiction over the colonies as an integral part of the empire, and was bent not only in enforcing this jurisdiction, but also resorted to the most offensive and impolitic measures to accomplish it,—this omnipotent Parliament, fancying it had a right to tax America without her consent, without a representation even, was resolved to carry out the abstract rights of a supreme governing power, both in order to assert its prerogative and to please certain classes in England who wished relief from the burden of taxation. And because Parliament had this power, it would use it, against the dictates of expediency and the instincts of common-sense; yea, in defiance of the great elemental truth in government that even thrones rest on the affections of the people. Blinded and infatuated with notions of prerogative, it would not even learn lessons from that conquered country which for five hundred years it had vainly attempted to coerce, and which it could finally govern only by a recognition of its rights.

Now, the great career of Burke began by opposing the leading opinions of his day in reference to the coercion of the American colonies. He discarded all theories and abstract rights. He would not even discuss the subject whether Parliament had a right to tax the colonies. He took the side of expediency and common-sense. It was enough for him that it was foolish and irritating to attempt to exercise abstract powers which could not be carried

out. He foresaw and he predicted the consequences of attempting to coerce such a people as the Americans with the forces which England could command. He pointed out the infatuation of the ministers of the crown, then led by Lord North. His speech against the Boston Port Bill was one of the most brilliant specimens of oratory ever displayed in the House of Commons. He did not encourage the colonies in rebellion, but pointed out the course they would surely pursue if the irritating measures of the Government were not withdrawn. He advocated conciliation, the withdrawal of theoretic rights, the repeal of obnoxious taxes, the removal of restrictions on American industry, the withdrawal of monopolies and of ungenerous distinctions. He would bind the two countries together by a cord of love. When some member remarked that it was horrible for children to rebel against their parents, Burke replied: "It is true the Americans are our children; but when children ask for bread, shall we give them a stone?" For ten years he labored with successive administrations to procure reconciliation. He spoke nearly every day. He appealed to reason, to justice, to common-sense. But every speech he made was a battle with ignorance and prejudice. "If you must employ your strength," said he indignantly, "employ it to uphold some honorable right. I do not enter upon metaphysical distinctions,—I hate the very name of them. Nobody can be argued into slavery. If you cannot reconcile your sovereignty with their freedom, the colonists will cast your sovereignty in your face. It is not enough that a statesman means well; duty demands that what is

right should not only be made known, but be made prevalent,—that what is evil should not only be detected, but be defeated. Do not dream that your registers, your bonds, your affidavits, your instructions, are the things which hold together the great texture of the mysterious whole. These dead instruments do not make a government. It is the spirit that pervades and vivifies an empire which infuses that obedience without which your army would be a base rabble and your navy nothing but rotten timber." Such is a fair specimen of his eloquence,—earnest, practical, to the point, yet appealing to exalted sentiments, and pervaded with moral wisdom; the result of learning as well as the dictate of a generous and enlightened policy. When reason failed, he resorted to sarcasm and mockery. "Because," said he, "we have a right to tax America we must do it; risk everything, forfeit everything, take into consideration nothing but our right. O infatuated ministers! Like a silly man, full of his prerogative over the beasts of the field, who says, there is wool on the back of a wolf, and therefore he must be sheared. What! shear a wolf? Yes. But have you considered the trouble? Oh, I have considered nothing but my right. A wolf is an animal that has wool; all animals that have wool are to be sheared; and therefore I will shear the wolf."

But I need not enlarge on his noble efforts to prevent a war with the colonies. They were all in vain. You cannot reason with infatuation,—*Quem deus vult perdere, prius dementat*. The logic of events at last showed the wisdom of Burke and the folly of the

king and his ministers, and of the nation at large. The disasters and the humiliation which attended the American war compelled the ministry to resign, and the Marquis of Rockingham became prime minister in 1782, and Burke, the acknowledged leader of his party, became paymaster of the forces,—an office at one time worth £25,000 a year, before the reform which Burke had instigated. But this great statesman was not admitted to the cabinet; George III. did not like him, and his connections were not sufficiently powerful to overcome the royal objection. In our times he would have been rewarded with a seat on the treasury bench; with less talents than he had, the commoners of our day become prime-ministers. But Burke did not long enjoy even the office of paymaster. On the death of Lord Rockingham, a few months after he had formed the ministry, Burke retired from the only office he ever held. And he retired to Beaconsfield,—an estate which he had purchased with the assistance of his friend Rockingham, where he lived when parliamentary duties permitted, in that state of blended elegance, leisure, and study which is to be found, in the greatest perfection, in England alone.

The political power of Burke culminated at the close of the war with America, but not his political influence: and there is a great difference between power and influence. Nor do we read that Burke, after this, headed the opposition. That position was shared by Charles James Fox, who ultimately supplanted his master as the leader of his party; not because Burke declined in wisdom or energy, but because Fox had more skill as a

debater, more popular sympathies, and more influential friends. Burke, like Gladstone, was too stern, too irritable, too imperious, too intellectually proud, perhaps too unyielding, to control such an ignorant, prejudiced, and aristocratic body as the House of Commons, jealous of his ascendancy and writhing under his rebukes. It must have been galling to the great philosopher to yield the palm to lesser men; but such has ever been the destiny of genius, except in crises of public danger. Of all things that politicians hate is the domination of a man who will not stoop to flatter, who cannot be bribed, and who will be certain to expose vices and wrongs. The world will not bear rebukes. The fate of prophets is to be stoned. A stern moral greatness is repulsive to the weak and wicked. Parties reward mediocre men, whom they can use or bend; and the greatest benefactors lose their popularity when they oppose the enthusiasm of new ideas, or become austere in their instructions. Thus the greatest statesman that this country has produced since Alexander Hamilton, lost his prestige when his conciliating policy became offensive to a rising party whose watchword was "the higher law," although, by his various conflicts with Southern leaders and his loyalty to the Constitution, he educated the people to sustain the very war which he foresaw and dreaded. And had that accomplished senator from Massachusetts, Charles Sumner, who succeeded to Webster's seat, and who in his personal appearance and advocacy for reform strikingly resembled Burke,—had he remained uninjured to our day, with increasing intellectual

powers and profounder moral wisdom, I doubt whether even he would have had much influence with our present legislators; for he had all the intellectual defects of both Burke and Webster, and never was so popular as either of them at one period of their career, while he certainly was inferior to both in native force, experience, and attainments.

The chief labors of Burke for the first ten years of his parliamentary life had been mainly in connection with American affairs, and which the result proved he comprehended better than any man in England. Those of the next ten years were directed principally to Indian difficulties, in which he showed the same minuteness of knowledge, the same grasp of intellect, the same moral wisdom, the same good sense, and the same regard for justice, that he had shown concerning the colonies. But in discussing Indian affairs his eloquence takes a loftier flight; he is less conciliating, more in earnest, more concerned with the principles of immutable obligations. He abhors the cruelties and tyranny inflicted on India by Clive and Hastings. He could see no good from an aggrandizement purchased by injustice and wrong. If it was criminal for an individual to cheat and steal, it was equally atrocious for a nation to plunder and oppress another nation, infidel or pagan, white or black. A righteous anger burned in the breast of Burke as he reflected on the wrongs and miseries of the natives of India. Why should that ancient country be ruled for no other purpose than to enrich the younger sons of a grasping aristocracy and the servants of an insatiable and unscrupulous

Company whose monopoly of spoils was the scandal of the age? If ever a reform was imperative in the government of a colony, it was surely in India, where the government was irresponsible. The English courts of justice there were more terrible to the natives than the very wrongs they pretended to redress. The customs and laws and moral ideas of the conquered country were spurned and ignored by the greedy scions of gentility who were sent to rule a population ten times larger than that between the Humber and the Thames.

So Burke, after the most careful study of the condition of India, lifted up his voice against the iniquities which were winked at by Parliament. But his fierce protest arrayed against him all the parties that indorsed these wrongs, or who were benefited by them. I need not dwell on his protracted labors for ten years in behalf of right, without the sympathies of those who had formerly supported him. No speeches were ever made in the English House of Commons which equalled, in eloquence and power, those he made on the Nabob of Arcot's debts and the impeachment of Warren Hastings. In these famous philippics, he fearlessly exposed the peculations, the misrule, the oppression, and the inhuman heartlessness of the Company's servants,—speeches which extorted admiration, while they humiliated and chastised. I need not describe the nine years' prosecution of a great criminal, and the escape of Hastings, more guilty and more fortunate than Verres, from the punishment he merited, through legal technicalities, the apathy of men in power, the

private influence of the throne, and the sympathies which fashion excited in his behalf,—and, more than all, because of the undoubted service he had rendered to his country, if it *was* a service to extend her rule by questionable means to the farthest limits of the globe. I need not speak of the obloquy which Burke incurred from the press, which teemed with pamphlets and books and articles to undermine his great authority, all in the interests of venal and powerful monopolists. Nor did he escape the wrath of the electors of Bristol,—a narrow-minded town of India traders and Negro dealers,—who withdrew from him their support. He had been solicited, in the midst of his former éclat, to represent this town, rather than the "rotten borough" of Wendover; and he proudly accepted the honor, and was the idol of his constituents until he presumed to disregard their instructions in matters of which he considered they were incompetent to judge. His famous letter to the electors, in which he refutes and ridicules their claim to instruct him, as the shoemakers of Lynn wished to instruct Daniel Webster, is a model of irony, as well as a dignified rebuke of all ignorant constituencies, and a lofty exposition of the duties of a statesman rather than of a politician.

He had also incurred the displeasure of the Bristol electors by his manly defence of the rights of the Irish Catholics, who since the conquest of William III. had been subjected to the most unjust and annoying treatment that ever disgraced a Protestant government. The injustices under which Ireland groaned were

nearly as repulsive as the cruelties inflicted upon the Protestants of France during the reign of Louis XIV. "On the suppression of the rebellion under Tyrconnel," says Morley, "nearly the whole of the land was confiscated, the peasants were made beggars and outlaws, the Penal Laws against Catholics were enforced, and the peasants were prostrate in despair." Even in 1765 "the native Irish were regarded by their Protestant oppressors with exactly that combination of intense contempt and loathing, rage and terror, which his American counterpart would have divided between the Indian and the Negro." Not the least of the labors of Burke was to bring to the attention of the nation the wrongs inflicted on the Irish, and the impossibility of ruling a people who had such just grounds for discontent. "His letter upon the propriety of admitting the Catholics to the elective franchise is one of the wisest of all his productions,—so enlightened is its idea of toleration, so sagacious is its comprehension of political exigencies." He did not live to see his ideas carried out, but he was among the first to prepare the way for Catholic emancipation in later times.

But a greater subject than colonial rights, or Indian wrongs, or persecution of the Irish Catholics agitated the mind of Burke, to which he devoted the energies of his declining years; and this was, the agitation growing out of the French Revolution. When that "roaring conflagration of anarchies" broke out, he was in the full maturity of his power and his fame,—a wise old statesman, versed in the lessons of human experience, who detested

sophistries and abstract theories and violent reforms; a man who while he loved liberty more than any political leader of his day, loathed the crimes committed in its name, and who was sceptical of any reforms which could not be carried on without a wanton destruction of the foundations of society itself. He was also a Christian who planted himself on the certitudes of religious faith, and was shocked by the flippant and shallow infidelity which passed current for progress and improvement. Next to the infidel spirit which would make Christianity and a corrupted church identical, as seen in the mockeries of Voltaire, and would destroy both under the guise of hatred of superstition, he despised those sentimentalities with which Rousseau and his admirers would veil their disgusting immoralities. To him hypocrisy and infidelity, under whatever name they were baptized by the new apostles of human rights, were mischievous and revolting. And as an experienced statesman he held in contempt the inexperience of the Revolutionary leaders, and the unscrupulous means they pursued to accomplish even desirable ends.

No man more than Burke admitted the necessity of even radical reforms, but he would have accomplished them without bloodshed and cruelties. He would not have removed undeniable evils by introducing still greater ones. He regarded the remedies proposed by the Revolutionary quacks as worse than the disease which they professed to cure. No man knew better than he the corruptions of the Catholic church in France, and the persecuting intolerance which that church had stimulated there ever since

the revocation of the Edict of Nantes,—an intolerance so cruel that to be married unless in accordance with Catholic usage was to live in concubinage, and to be suspected of Calvinism was punishable by imprisonment or the galleys. But because the established church was corrupt and intolerant, he did not see the necessity for the entire and wholesale confiscation of its lands and possessions (which had not been given originally by the nation, but were the bequests of individuals), thereby giving a vital wound to all the rights of property which civilization in all countries has held sacred and inviolable. Burke knew that the Bourbon absolute monarchy was oppressive and tyrannical, extravagant and indifferent to the welfare of the people; but he would not get rid of it by cutting off the head of the king, especially when Louis was willing to make great concessions: he would have limited his power, or driven him into exile as the English punished James II. He knew that the nobles abused their privileges; he would have taken them away rather than attempt to annul their order, and decimate them by horrid butcheries. He did not deny the necessity of reforms so searching that they would be almost tantamount to revolution; but he would not violate both constitutional forms and usages, and every principle of justice and humanity, in order to effect them.

To Burke's mind, the measures of the revolutionists were all mixed up with impieties, sophistries, absurdities, and blasphemies, to say nothing of cruelties and murders. What good could grow out of such an evil tree? Could men who ignored

all duties be the expounders of rights? What structure could last, when its foundation was laid on the sands of hypocrisy, injustice, ignorance, and inexperience? What sympathy could such a man as Burke have for atheistic theories, or a social progress which scorned the only conditions by which society can be kept together? The advanced men who inaugurated the Reign of Terror were to him either fools, or fanatics, or assassins. He did not object to the meeting of the States-General to examine into the intolerable grievances, and, if necessary, to strip the king of tyrannical powers, for such a thing the English parliament had done; but it was quite another thing for *one branch* of the States-General to constitute itself the nation, and usurp the powers and functions of the other two branches; to sweep away, almost in a single night, the constitution of the realm; to take away all the powers of the king, imprison him, mock him, insult him, and execute him, and then to cut off the heads of the nobles who supported him, and of all people who defended him, even women themselves, and convert the whole land into a Pandemonium! What contempt must he have had for legislators who killed their king, decimated their nobles, robbed their clergy, swept away all social distinctions, abolished the rites of religion,—all symbols, honors, and privileges; all that was ancient, all that was venerable, all that was poetic, even to abbey churches; yea, dug up the very bones of ancient monarchs from the consecrated vaults where they had reposed for centuries, and scattered them to the winds; and then amid the mad saturnalia of sacrilege, barbarity,

and blasphemy to proclaim the reign of "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality," with Marat for their leader, and Danton for their orator, and Robespierre for their high-priest; and, finally, to consummate the infamous farce of reform by openly setting up a wanton woman as the idol of their worship, under the name of the Goddess of Reason!

But while Burke saw only one side of these atrocities, he did not close his eyes to the necessity for reforms. Had he been a Frenchman, he would strenuously have lifted up his voice to secure them, but in a legal and constitutional manner,—not by violence, not by disregarding the principles of justice and morality to secure a desirable end. He was one of the few statesmen then living who would not do evil that good might come. He was no Jesuit. There is a class of politicians who would have acted differently; and this class, in his day, was made up of extreme and radical people, with infidel sympathies. With this class he was no favorite, and never can be. Conservative people judge him by a higher standard; they shared at the time in his sympathies and prejudices.

Even in America the excesses of the Revolution excited general abhorrence; much more so in England. And it was these excesses, this mode of securing reform, not reform itself, which excited Burke's detestation. Who can wonder at this? Those who accept crimes as a necessary outbreak of revolutionary passions adopt a philosophy which would veil the world with a funereal and diabolical gloom. Reformers must be taught that

no reforms achieved by crime are worth the cost. Nor is it just to brand an illustrious man with indifference to great moral and social movements because he would wait, sooner than upturn the very principles on which society is based. And here is the great difficulty in estimating the character and labors of Burke. Because he denounced the French Revolution, some think he was inconsistent with his early principles. Not at all; it was the crimes and excesses of the Revolution he denounced, not the impulse of the French people to achieve their liberties. Those crimes and excesses he believed to be inconsistent with an enlightened desire for freedom; but freedom itself, to its utmost limit and application, consistent with law and order, he desired. Is it necessary for mankind to win its greatest boons by going through a sea of anarchies, madness, assassinations, and massacres? Those who take this view of revolution, it seems to me, are neither wise nor learned. If a king makes war on his subjects, they are warranted in taking up arms in their defence, even if the civil war is followed by enormities. Thus the American colonies took up arms against George III.; but they did not begin with crimes. Louis XVI. did not take up arms against his subjects, nor league against them, until they had crippled and imprisoned him. He made even great concessions; he was willing to make still greater to save his crown. But the leaders of the revolution were not content with these, not even with the abolition of feudal privileges; they wanted to subvert the monarchy itself, to abolish the order of nobility, to sweep away

even the Church,—not the Catholic establishment only, but the Christian religion also, with all the institutions which time and poetry had consecrated. Their new heaven and new earth was not the reign of the saints, which the millenarians of Cromwell's time prayed for devoutly, but a sort of communistic equality, where every man could do precisely as he liked, take even his neighbor's property, and annihilate all distinctions of society, all inequalities of condition,—a miserable, fanatical dream, impossible to realize under any form of government which can be conceived. It was this spirit of reckless innovation, promulgated by atheists and drawn logically from some principles of the "Social Contract" of which Rousseau was the author, which excited the ire of Burke. It was license, and not liberty.

And while the bloody and irreligious excesses of the Revolution called out his detestation, the mistakes and incapacity of the new legislators excited his contempt. He condemned a *compulsory* paper currency,—not a paper currency, but a compulsory one,—and predicted bankruptcy. He ridiculed an army without a head,—not the instrument of the executive, but of a military democracy receiving orders from the clubs. He made sport of the legislature ruled by the commune, and made up not of men of experience, but of adventurers, stock-jobbers, directors of assignats, trustees for the sale of church-lands, who "took a constitution in hand as savages would a looking-glass,"—a body made up of those courtiers who wished to cut off the head of their king, of those priests who voted religion a nuisance,

of those lawyers who called the laws a dead letter, of those philosophers who admitted no argument but the guillotine, of those sentimentalists who chanted the necessity of more blood, of butchers and bakers and brewers who would exterminate the very people who bought from them.

And the result of all this wickedness and folly on the mind of Burke was the most eloquent and masterly political treatise probably ever written,—a treatise in which there may be found much angry rhetoric and some unsound principles, but which blazes with genius on every page, which coruscates with wit, irony, and invective; scornful and sad doubtless, yet full of moral wisdom; a perfect thesaurus of political truths. I have no words with which to express my admiration for the wisdom and learning and literary excellence of the "Reflections on the French Revolution" as a whole,—so luminous in statement, so accurate in the exposure of sophistries, so full of inspired intuitions, so Christian in its tone. This celebrated work was enough to make any man immortal. It was written and rewritten with the most conscientious care. It appeared in 1790; and so great were its merits, so striking, and yet so profound, that thirty thousand copies were sold in a few weeks. It was soon translated into all the languages of Europe, and was in the hands of all thinking men. It was hailed with especial admiration by Christian and conservative classes, though bitterly denounced by many intelligent people as gloomy and hostile to progress. But whether liked or disliked, it made a great impression, and contributed to

settle public opinion in reference to French affairs. What can be more just and enlightened than such sentiments as these, which represent the spirit of the treatise:—

"Because liberty is to be classed among the blessings of mankind, am I to felicitate a madman who has escaped from the restraints of his cell? There is no qualification for government but virtue and wisdom. Woe be to that country that would madly reject the service of talents and virtues. Nothing is an adequate representation of a State that does not represent its ability as well as property. Men have a right to justice, and the fruits of industry, and the acquisitions of their parents, and the improvement of their offspring,—to instruction in life and consolation in death; but they have no right to what is unreasonable, and what is not for their benefit. The new professors are so taken up with rights that they have totally forgotten duties; and without opening one new avenue to the understanding, they have succeeded in stopping those that lead to the heart. Those who attempt by outrage and violence to deprive men of any advantage which they hold under the laws, proclaim war against society. When, I ask, will such truths become obsolete among enlightened people; and when will they become stale?"

But with this fierce protest against the madness and violence of the French Revolution, the wisdom of Burke and of the English nation ended. The most experienced and sagacious man of his age, with all his wisdom and prescience, could see only one side of the awful political hurricane which he was so eloquent

in denouncing. His passions and his prejudices so warped his magnificent intellect, that he could not see the good which was mingled with the evil; that the doctrine of equality, if false when applied to the actual condition of men at their birth, is yet a state to which the institutions of society tend, under the influence of education and religion; that the common brotherhood of man, mocked by the tyrants which feudalism produced, is yet to be drawn from the Sermon on the Mount; that the blood of a plebeian carpenter is as good as that of an aristocratic captain of artillery; that public burdens which bear heavily on the poor should also be shared equally by the rich; that all laws should be abolished which institute unequal privileges; that taxes should be paid by nobles as well as by peasants; that every man should be unfettered in the choice of his calling and profession; that there should be unbounded toleration of religious opinions; that no one should be arbitrarily arrested and confined without trial and proof of crime; that men and women, with due regard to the rights of others, should be permitted to marry whomsoever they please; that, in fact, a total change in the spirit of government, so imperatively needed in France, was necessary. These were among the great ideas which the reformers advocated, but which they did not know how practically to secure on those principles of justice which they abstractly invoked,—ideas never afterwards lost sight of, in all the changes of government. And it is remarkable that the flagrant evils which the Revolution so ruthlessly swept away have never since been revived, and never

can be revived any more than the oracles of Dodona or the bulls of Mediaeval Rome; amid the storms and the whirlwinds and the fearful convulsions and horrid anarchies and wicked passions of a great catastrophe, the imperishable ideas of progress forced their way.

Nor could Burke foresee the ultimate results of the Revolution any more than he would admit the truths which were overshadowed by errors and crimes. Nor, inflamed with rage and scorn, was he wise in the remedies he proposed. Only God can overrule the wrath of man, and cause melodious birth-songs to succeed the agonies of dissolution. Burke saw the absurdity of sophistical theories and impractical equality,—liberty running into license, and license running into crime; he saw pretensions, quackeries, inexperience, folly, and cruelty, and he prophesied what their legitimate effect would be: but he did not see in the Revolution the pent-up indignation and despair of centuries, nor did he hear the voices of hungry and oppressed millions crying to heaven for vengeance. He did not recognize the chastening hand of God on tyrants and sensualists; he did not see the arm of retributive justice, more fearful than the daggers of Roman assassins, more stern than the overthrow of Persian hosts, more impressive than the handwriting on the wall of Belshazzar's palace; nor could he see how creation would succeed destruction amid the burnings of that vast funeral pyre. He foresaw, perhaps, that anarchy would be followed by military despotism; but he never anticipated a Napoleon Bonaparte, or the

military greatness of a nation so recently ground down by Jacobin orators and sentimental executioners. He never dreamed that out of the depths and from the clouds and amid the conflagration there would come a deliverance, at least for a time, in the person of a detested conqueror; who would restore law, develop industry, secure order, and infuse enthusiasm into a country so nearly ruined, and make that country glorious beyond precedent, until his mad passion for unlimited dominion should arouse insulted nations to form a coalition which even he should not be powerful enough to resist, gradually hemming him round in a king-hunt, until they should at last confine him on a rock in the ocean, to meditate and to die.

Where Burke and the nation he aroused by his eloquence failed in wisdom, was in opposing this revolutionary storm with bayonets. Had he and the leaders of his day confined themselves to rhetoric and arguments, if ever so exaggerated and irritating; had they allowed the French people to develop their revolution in their own way, as they had the right to do,—then the most dreadful war of modern times, which lasted twenty years, would have been confined within smaller limits. Napoleon would have had no excuse for aggressive warfare; Pitt would not have died of a broken heart; large standing armies, the curse of Europe, would not have been deemed so necessary; the ancient limits of France might have been maintained; and a policy of development might have been inaugurated, rather than a policy which led to future wars and national humiliation. The gigantic struggles of

Napoleon began when France was attacked by foreign nations, fighting for their royalties and feudalities, and aiming to suppress a domestic revolution which was none of their concern, and which they imperfectly understood.

But at this point we must stop, for I tread on ground where only speculation presumes to stand. The time has not come to solve such a mighty problem as the French Revolution, or even the career of Napoleon Bonaparte. We can pronounce on the logical effects of right and wrong,—that violence leads to anarchy, and anarchy to ruin; but we cannot tell what would have been the destiny of France if the Revolution had not produced Napoleon, nor what would have been the destiny of England if Napoleon had not been circumvented by the powers of Europe. On such questions we are children; the solution of them is hidden by the screens of destiny; we can only speculate. And since we short-sighted mortals cannot tell what will be the ultimate effect of the great agitations of society, whether begun in noble aspirations or in depraved passions, it is enough for us to settle down, with firm convictions, on what we can see,—that crimes, under whatever name they go, are eternally to be reprobated, whatever may be the course they are made to take by Him who rules the universe. It would be difficult to single out any memorable war in this world's history which has not been ultimately overruled for the good of the world, whatever its cause or character,—like the Crusades, the most unfortunate in their immediate effects of all the great wars which nations have madly waged. But this only proves that God

is stronger than devils, and that he overrules the wrath of man. "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." There is only one standard by which to judge the actions of men; there is only one rule whereby to guide nations or individuals,—and that is, to do right; to act on the principles of immutable justice.

Now, whatever were the defects in the character or philosophy of Burke, it cannot be denied that this was the law which he attempted to obey, the rule which he taught to his generation. In this light, his life and labors command our admiration, because he *did* uphold the right and condemn the wrong, and was sufficiently clear-headed to see the sophistries which concealed the right and upheld the wrong. That was his peculiar excellence. How loftily his majestic name towers above the other statesmen of his troubled age! Certainly no equal to him, in England, has since appeared, in those things which give permanent fame. The man who has most nearly approached him is Gladstone. If the character of our own Webster had been as reproachless as his intellect was luminous and comprehensive, he might be named in the same category of illustrious men. Like the odor of sanctity, which was once supposed to emanate from a Catholic saint, the halo of Burke's imperishable glory is shed around every consecrated retreat of that land which thus far has been the bulwark of European liberty. The English nation will not let him die; he cannot die in the hearts and memories of man any more than can Socrates or Washington. No nation will be

long ungrateful for eminent public services, even if he who rendered them was stained by grave defects; for it is services which make men immortal. Much more will posterity reverence those benefactors whose private lives were in harmony with their principles,—the Hales, the L'Hôpitals, the Hampdens of the world. To this class Burke undeniably belonged. All writers agree as to his purity of morals, his generous charities, his high social qualities, his genial nature, his love of simple pleasures, his deep affections, his reverence, his Christian life. He was a man of sorrows, it is true, like most profound and contemplative natures, whose labors are not fully appreciated,—like Cicero, Dante, and Michael Angelo. He was doomed, too, like Galileo, to severe domestic misfortunes. He was greatly afflicted by the death of his only son, in whom his pride and hopes were bound up. "I am like one of those old oaks which the late hurricane has scattered about me," said he. "I am torn up by the roots; I lie prostrate on the earth." And when care and disease hastened his departure from a world he adorned, his body was followed to the grave by the most illustrious of the great men of the land, and the whole nation mourned as for a brother or a friend.

But it is for his writings and published speeches that he leaves the most enduring fame; and what is most valuable in his writings is his elucidation of fundamental principles in morals and philosophy. And here was his power,—not his originality, for which he was distinguished in an eminent degree; not learning, which amazed his auditors; not sarcasm, of which he was a

master; not wit, with which he brought down the house; not passion, which overwhelmed even such a man as Hastings; not fluency, with every word in the language at his command; not criticism, so searching that no sophistry could escape him; not philosophy, musical as Apollo's lyre,—but *insight* into great principles, the moral force of truth clearly stated and fearlessly defended. This elevated him to a sphere which words and gestures, and the rich music and magnetism of voice and action can never reach, since it touched the heart and the reason and the conscience alike, and produced convictions that nothing can stifle. There were more famous and able men than he, in some respects, in Parliament at the time. Fox surpassed him in debate, Pitt in ready replies and adaptation to the genius of the house, Sheridan in wit, Townsend in parliamentary skill, Mansfield in legal acumen; but no one of these great men was so forcible as Burke in the statement of truths which future statesmen will value. And as he unfolded and applied the imperishable principles of right and wrong, he seemed like an ancient sage bringing down to earth the fire of the divinities he invoked and in which he believed, not to chastise and humiliate, but to guide and inspire.

In recapitulating the services by which Edmund Burke will ultimately be judged, I would say that he had a hand in almost every movement for which his generation is applauded. He gave an impulse to almost every political discussion which afterwards resulted in beneficent reform. Some call him a croaker, without

sympathy for the ideas on which modern progress is based; but he was really one of the great reformers of his day. He lifted up his voice against the slave-trade; he encouraged and lauded the labors of Howard; he supported the just claims of the Catholics; he attempted, though a churchman, to remove the restrictions to which dissenters were subjected; he opposed the cruel laws against insolvent debtors; he sought to soften the asperities of the Penal Code; he labored to abolish the custom of enlisting soldiers for life; he attempted to subvert the dangerous powers exercised by judges in criminal prosecutions for libel; he sought financial reform in various departments of the State; he would have abolished many useless offices in the government; he fearlessly exposed the wrongs of the East India Company; he tried to bring to justice the greatest political criminal of the day; he took the right side of American difficulties, and advocated a policy which would have secured for half a century longer the allegiance of the American colonies, and prevented the division of the British empire; he advocated measures which saved England, possibly, from French subjugation; he threw the rays of his genius over all political discussions; and he left treatises which from his day to ours have proved a mine of political and moral wisdom, for all whose aim or business it has been to study the principles of law or government. These, truly, were services for which any country should be grateful, and which should justly place Edmund Burke on the list of great benefactors. These constitute a legacy of which all nations should be proud.

AUTHORITIES

Works and Correspondence of Edmund Burke; Life and Times of Edmund Burke, by Macknight (the ablest and fullest yet written); An Historical Study, by Morley (very able); Lives of Burke by Croly, Prior, and Bisset; Grenville Papers; Parliamentary History; the Encyclopaedia Britannica has a full article on Burke; Massey's History of England; Chatham's Correspondence; Moore's Life of Sheridan; also the Lives of Pitt and Fox; Lord Brougham's Sketch of Burke; C.W. Dilke's Papers of a Critic; Boswell's Life of Johnson. The most brilliant of Burke's writings, "Reflections on the French Revolution," should be read by everybody.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

A.D. 1769-1821

THE FRENCH EMPIRE

It is difficult to say anything new about Napoleon Bonaparte, either in reference to his genius, his character, or his deeds.

His genius is universally admitted, both as a general and an administrator. No general so great has appeared in our modern times. He ranks with Alexander and Caesar in ancient times, and he is superior to Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne, Condé, Marlborough, Frederic II., Wellington, or any of the warriors who have figured in the great wars of Europe, from Charlemagne to the battle of Waterloo. His military career was so brilliant that it dazzled contemporaries. Without the advantages of birth or early patronage, he rose to the highest pinnacle of human glory. His victories were prodigious and unexampled; and it took all Europe to resist him. He aimed at nothing less than universal sovereignty; and had he not, when intoxicated with his conquests, attempted impossibilities, his power would have been practically unlimited in France. He had all the qualities for success in war,—

insight, fertility of resource, rapidity of movement, power of combination, coolness, intrepidity, audacity, boldness tempered by calculation, will, energy which was never relaxed, powers of endurance, and all the qualities which call out enthusiasm and attach soldiers and followers to personal interests. His victorious career was unchecked until all the nations of Europe, in fear and wrath, combined against him. He was a military prodigy, equally great in tactics and strategy,—a master of all the improvements which had been made in the art of war, from Epaminondas to Frederic II.

His genius for civil administration was equally remarkable, and is universally admitted. Even Metternich, who detested him, admits that "he was as great as a statesman as he was as a warrior, and as great as an administrator as he was as a statesman." He brought order out of confusion, developed the industry of his country, restored the finances, appropriated and rewarded all eminent talents, made the whole machinery of government subservient to his aims, and even seemed to animate it by his individual will. He ruled France as by the power of destiny. The genius of Richelieu, of Mazarin, and of Colbert pale before his enlightened mind, which comprehended equally the principles of political science and the vast details of a complicated government. For executive ability I know no monarch who has surpassed him.

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