

humanity and the nation's honor, he exposed the full horror and blackness of the crimes, he showed what curses would follow if such monstrous evils were allowed to live, and insisted that "every means effectual to preserve India from oppression is a guard to preserve the British Constitution from its worst corruption."

Notwithstanding his efforts Hastings was acquitted, and all his toil was devoid of direct result. Great causes move slowly, and, though there were no immediate reforms, he had succeeded in setting rolling a vast wave of indignation against those gross wrongs. His fervent denunciation of oppression and his strong appeals to justice gave birth to a healthful public opinion concerning government in India, which ultimately lead to most salutary reforms.

It may not be at once evident how this affair affected the constitution of Great Britain, but, be it remembered, the British constitution consists largely in unwritten law. Ancient custom is its principal sanction, and like other matters the treatment of its dependencies is ordered to a great extent by precedent. In the case of India there was a flagrant breach of justice. The abuse had grown to enormous dimensions and had infected the very vitality of the state. All England was complicated in the robberies committed there; hardly a family but had a member sucking honey from that purloined comb. The monster had benumbed and silenced the public conscience, so that the whole topic was odious to the legislators of the nation. There is no more persistent or noxious weed in government than extortion and oppression on the part of its agents. Corruption in delegated government engenders all sorts of political maladies. Its illgotten gold tempts those who should have destroyed it; it binds the tongues of statesmen in its spell, and eats into the very heart and marrow of all righteousness. Had such evils been left unmolested they would ere this have brought upon England the disruption and decay which naturally and inevitably visit the vessels of long continued corruption. Burke came to a timely rescue. Such precedents were already too numerous; the fabric of British power had already been in many parts punctured by maladministration; each new instance of the vice made the public

conscience more "familiar with her face," and soon it would have made the distance from "to endure" to the "embrace." He struck the evil at the root, and the evil practice destroyed was a defect of the constitution menaced.

Burke's greatest mark on the constitution of Great Britain is the barrier he opposed to the inroads of the French Revolutionary spirit. For this work he deserves, not merely a national tribute, but the gratitude of all Europe; to his influence more than to any other is due the honor of preserving the established order of Europe at a time when the whole social edifice was shaken and threatened with subversion by the revolutionary earthquakes in France. His steadying hand supported while the very foundations of society itself threatened to be rent by that explosion of sophistries and false principles which in France leveled to the ground the temples of justice, order, and security. It is not even too much to say that if the resultant of the causes which led to the meeting at Waterloo and to the checking of that bold scheme of a magnificent Caesarism contemplated by Napoleon were analysed, it is not too much to say that Burke's influence would be found the largest component and in the direct line of force. It is impossible to justly estimate the effect of his writings on the public sentiment of the time. He used the loftiest, largest views in combating it, yet without any vagueness; he treated it in the most practical manner, yet without any monotonous common place. He appealed to the deep seated prejudices of English national life and led the English people safely through the most dangerous crisis of their history.

Burke was already an old man when he was called upon to take up his pen against the French Revolution. He had already done service in two revolutions; one by which England, through contempt of his councils, had lost her American possessions; the other by which a new empire was gained in the East. In both these momentous affairs he had stood on the side of freedom, against the arrogance of royalty. Now, actuated by the same motives of justice, humanity and order, he defended the throne against the wild