

consistency, his broad liberality, his healthy conservatism and his universally sound wisdom.

The first question which called forth Burke's energies on entering Parliament was that arising out of the complications with the American colonies. Parliament, counting too much upon the weakness and submissiveness of the colonies, had levied taxes upon them for the purpose of raising a Parliamentary revenue. This measure was so warmly resented that the ministry had, repealed a great part of the tax, still leaving, however, sufficient to maintain the principle that Parliament, being supreme, had a right to tax at will. Then, too, there had arisen in England very imperious ideas concerning the treatment of the colonies. These were regarded as subjects and tributaries. Their trade was monopolized, their internal affairs governed arbitrarily, odious exactions were required of them, and, worst of all, it was sought to intimidate them by the presence of an armed force. Burke immediately grasped the whole aspect of affairs. He saw at once the injustice as well as the imprudence of the course the ministry had taken; he perceived that their arrogance was the wedge that, the farther driven, the wider would make the breach in the unity of the empire. He labored mightily to remove it and his failure was due, not to any defect of his, but to the obstinacy of his hearers.

In this question, as in all, he thought broadly. He aimed at once at justice and the preservation of the empire; the one being secured, he was confident the other would follow. To procure the first he endeavored to obtain the admission of the colonists to equal ground in constitutional liberties with Englishmen. That the colonies should contribute to the common defense he did not deny, but he repudiated taxing them directly, holding that aid should be received from them by grant not by imposition. Parliament persisted and open rupture followed. He then came forward with a proposal of conciliation. He began by laying down the causes of the belligerent spirit displayed by the Americans, chief among which were their love of liberty, their consciousness of equality by birthright with Englishmen, the nature of their religion and the know-

ledge of their own power. Three heads embraced the remedies which had been proposed or were possible for allaying the obstinate spirit of the Americans. The first was the removal of the causes, and this he objected to as inhuman, wanton, and pernicious. It meant the scattering of the towns, the reduction of the colonists to mere shepherds and agriculturists, the destruction of their social institutions, the breaking of their spirit, in fact the spoiling of the thing in the recovery. Another proposal was to prosecute it as criminal, a course equally unjust and impracticable, for, as he rightly divined, the colonists would say: "a government against which a claim of liberty is tantamount to high treason, is a government to which submission is equivalent to slavery." He therefore advised and urged the only other possible means of retaining the empire of the west—conciliation. This, of course, would necessitate concessions, and he was ready to concede to the colonists the repeal of all direct taxes hitherto levied upon them. He did not, like Pitt, debate the question on the abstract principle that taxation entails the right of representation; he pointedly refused—which was characteristic of him—to discuss it on metaphysical grounds; but his conclusions were none the less equitable. Abstractions were odious to him, he would have it only in the concrete. He refused to speculate on what Parliament *might* or *might* not do in regard to their colonies. He was concerned only in what they *ought* to do, and maintained that no prerogatives of a government were abdicated if it exceeded strict justice in its provisions for the welfare of its dependencies. Concord and unity of spirit, he held, were the safeguards of the empire, not domination by physical force; and the secret of harmony, he perceived, was equality in the enjoyment of constitutional privileges. He did not indeed advocate colonial representation in Parliament for the colonies, but instead, assemblies which should administer home rule. In his opinion Parliament had a twofold character—domestic and imperial. It was secondarily the home government of England, but in its primary capacity it was the head and centre of an empire of autonomous states. As the several component states were co-ordinate, they must