

the opportunity of the most important of political experiments, we should still have everything to learn from the author's treatment; the vigorous grasp of masses of compressed detail, the wide illumination from great principles of human experience, the strong and masculine feeling for the two great political ends of Justice and Freedom, the large and generous interpretation of expediency, the morality, the vision, the noble temper. If ever, in the fulness of time—and surely the fates of men and literature cannot have it otherwise—Burke becomes one of the half-dozen names of established and universal currency in education and in common books, rising above the waywardness of literary caprice or intellectual fashions, as Shakespeare, and Milton, and Bacon rise above it, it will be the mastery, the elevation, the wisdom of these far-shining discourses in which the world will in an especial degree recognize the combination of sovereign gifts with beneficent uses."

Our space will not permit us to treat fully of the trial of Warren Hastings. We pass it the more readily as it marks a decline in Burke's fame as a wise and prudent statesman. Suffice it to say, that it cost him fourteen years of the hardest labour, and that Hastings was in the end acquitted. True, he achieved the greater success, of overturning the system of rule then prevalent in India, and was indirectly the author of other valuable reforms; but the result of it to him was disappointment and chagrin, the loss of reputation, and the beginning of the end of his friendship with his political colleagues. We hasten to the second great event of his life—the French Revolution.

Burke has been strongly condemned, and perhaps justly, for the action he took upon the French question. But it is instructive to note the peculiar circumstances, when he first be-

gan to give attention to France. His private affairs were much straitened; he had been harassed and opposed at every step in his career; the "hunt of obloquy," as he himself called it, had pursued him all through life; he had been fighting in the cause of liberty and order against a hopeless majority, who were too ignorant to comprehend his wisdom, too noisy, and too servile to their leaders, who wished to discredit Burke, to appreciate his eloquence, who whispered abroad the significant words "St. Omar," "Papist," "Adventurer"; he had been openly and continuously charged with the crime of writing the "Letters of Junius"; he had wasted his talents, his temper, his eloquence and his best years in the prosecution of Hastings; he was surrounded by a following of somewhat disreputable Irish adherents who would have sunk anyone but himself; and to crown all, he did not at this time enjoy the confidence of the chiefs of his party. What wonder that his nature had become embittered, and that his passionate eloquence began to degenerate into the wordiness of a scold! What wonder that he sometimes finished his speeches "in a manner next to madness!" Is it not rather to be wondered at that he still retained his fine appreciation of the glorious truths of universal order, justice and humanity, with which the "Reflections on the French Revolution" abounds?

The key-note to Burke's attitude is easily found. He had the most profound reverence for the established order of things. He never ceased to combat the philosophers of his time who were untiring in their efforts to penetrate the mysteries of first principles. He appreciated the absurdity in the English Constitution of the King's wild grasping at absolute power. He had mastered the Constitution as few other men mastered it;