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## BURKE'S INFLUENCE ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.



U preserve order is no less a service than to create it; the man who preserves the constitution of a state is no less a benefactor than he who frames it. Some of the greatest statesmen the world has seen have served their country, not in establishing principles and rules of government, but in giving stability to those already existing by discovering the latent wisdom of the present order of things, and by making the application of those principles more complete. The ever changing fancies of men tend to destroy solidity of things; the whims of the hour, the delusions of visionaries constantly threaten the continuance of a state and constitute a continual strain upon the props and stays of well proved order. It is difficult to make the yoke of government rest easily and equally on all. Rule supposes submission and with submission there is always more or less consequent chafing of the yoke, hence perennial effort at shifting the burden. To maintain against this changefulness the steadiness of a social system that suited other days, to adapt old forms to new exigencies when possible and to avoid dangerous experiments in great concerns is the mission of the sound statesman. Such was the work of Edmund Burke, England's greatest statesman.

He was no Lycurgus, his state was born before he was; it had its institutions and

laws made venerable with the hoar of centuries, and for them he had the deepest respect. He antagonized British government on many lines but in crushing its abuses he never went beyond the elementary principles of the British constitution. He found within it the remedy for its every evil, and the same principles which served to heal its own sores served as well to barricade it against those who sought to subvert it.

It would be almost impossible to estimate the influence he exerted in creating a healthful public opinion of the real meaning of British law and its true interpretation, or of the power he exercised in preserving the constitution from subversion and in preserving not only the English people but all Europe from the debauchery and degradation of a French Revolution. Burke always held a middle course between liberty and monarchy. "Our constitution," said he, "stands on a nice equipoise with steep precipices and deep waters upon all sides of it." At one time we find him defending the freedom of the people against the arrogance of the Crown and the Parliament, at another rebuking the insolence of an excited people and defending royalty. Yet so firm is he in his convictions that nowhere in the sentiments of his various attitudes can be found a contradiction. Three of the great questions which agitated his mind during his political career will be sufficient to indicate his