

Scotchmen, was fighting single-handed the prejudices and animosities of the nation.

Burke's entry into public life began with his appointment as private secretary to Hamilton, who was sent to Ireland as secretary to Lord Halifax. He remained there six years and was thus enabled to thoroughly inform himself upon the condition of his unhappy country. Not the least result of his sojourn in Ireland, are his letters on the "Penal Laws against the Catholics," and his still more masterly "Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe," written in 1782 and 1792 respectively. In 1765 he quarrelled with Hamilton and returned to England.

But he was not long to remain inactive. Bute fell amidst the howls of his enemies; and in spite of the strong backing of the King, George Grenville came next and also failed, and the King as a *dernier resort* called in Lord Rockingham. This nobleman made Burke his private secretary.

It is a matter, at the same time, for regret and congratulation that Burke should have been induced to throw in his political fortunes with the Rockingham party. In the interests of morality it is well, for the Rockingham party was perhaps the only one which had any claim to political purity. It was composed of a set of men, whose personal honour was above suspicion, and who held the welfare of their country above individual advancement and political power. It was of this party that the great Chatham long afterwards said, "I am resolved that I will not even sit at council but to meet Lord Rockingham. He, and he alone, has a knot of spotless friends such as ought to govern this kingdom." On the other hand, he was condemned to a whole life of opposition, which embittered his nature, materially impaired his faculties, and at last

estranged his friends. We look back upon that long and bitter strife against an implacable minister backed by a hooting majority, with a wistful longing that it had been otherwise. Had Burke been subjected to a long course of official life, his fierce passions would doubtless have become subdued; he would have been in a position to serve better, not only the country of his adoption, but also his native land, whose interests party considerations, later on, induced him to oppose; and it is extremely doubtful that he would ever have committed himself to the fiercest tirades ever penned by mortal man, which resulted in the embarrassment of the empire, and the addition to its national debt of six hundred millions of money.

Besides, the manner and reason of his final rupture with Fox, Sheridan, and Portland, seem to point to the fact that Burke never should have joined the party he did. His principles *au fond* were Conservative, and his long union with the Rockingham party was the result of early associations, to which his passionate nature clung, and of a common cause against the tyranny of the court. He revered, almost worshipped, the Constitution to such a degree that to tamper with it was, with him, a crime inexpiable. He was the apostle of order, not of reform. He believed, with Turgot, that everything should be done for the people, nothing by them.

However, he took office under Lord Rockingham in 1765, and was returned to parliament for Wendover. His party remained in power for a year and a half, but then fell, and was succeeded by the Chatham government. Now was his chance. The change was merely one of individuals, not of principle. Burke was urged to take office under it by his friends; and his reputation as an orator had