

Edmund Burke and Ireland.

EDMUND BURKE was one of the greatest philosophic statesmen and orators of modern times. The exact date of his birth is not known but the most popular opinion is that this extraordinary man first saw the light of day in Dublin on the twelfth day of January in the year seventeen hundred and twenty-nine. His father was a Roman Catholic, but in order to retain a lucrative government position, he became a member of the Anglican Church. Burke's mother was a staunch Catholic and died professing that faith which was so dear to her. The one daughter followed the religion of the mother, while the three sons, Thomas, Richard and Edmund were brought up in the religion of the father. But, although a Protestant, Burke was not a bigot, and throughout his entire life he was always the champion of the oppressed Roman Catholics both in England and in Ireland.

At the age of eleven, Burke's education was entrusted to Abraham Shackleton, a Quaker, who conducted a private school at Ballitore, a village a few miles outside of Dublin. It was to this humble tutor that Burke owed his future greatness. The good man instilled into the heart of his young pupil two qualities that stood him in good stead in after life—namely—love of justice, and pity for the oppressed. Nor was Burke ungrateful to the man who moulded such a sterling character in him—"If I am anything today," he said, "it is the education I had there that has made me so." And when he heard of Shackleton's death, which took place in 1771, he wrote: "I had a true honor and affection for that excellent man. I feel something like a satisfaction in the midst of my concern, that I was fortunate enough to have him under my roof before his departure."

In 1748 Burke graduated with his Bachelor's degree from Trinity College. During the five years spent at this institution, he was not a student according to the ideals of a college professor, but, like many others, he studied only those subjects that appealed most to him. He tells us himself that he had four "furors"—"furor mathematicus," "furor logicus", furor "historicus" and "furor poeticus." He was an assiduous reader and lost no time, in fact, he much preferred passing the hours of recreation in this manner. His brother Richard said of him—