

BURKE'S SPEECH ON AMERICAN TAXATION

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Burke's Speech on American Taxation by Edmund Burke & James Hugh Moffatt

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EDMUND BURKE & JAMES HUGH MOFFATT

**BURKE'S SPEECH
ON AMERICAN
TAXATION**



From the Romney portrait



BURKE'S SPEECH
ON
AMERICAN TAXATION

EDITED
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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PREFACE

William Hazlitt said: "There is no single speech of Mr. Burke which can convey a satisfactory idea of his powers of mind: to do him justice, it would be necessary to quote all his works; the only specimen of Burke is, *all that he wrote.*" If a specimen must be selected, it is wise to select his two speeches on American affairs, both of which should be read by every student of literature and of history. This edition of *American Taxation* has been prepared to meet the actual demands of the class room. Too often the student is content with reading *Conciliation with America*. Experience in class rooms for four years with six hundred students has shown that, notwithstanding the excellence of *Conciliation with America*, it gives students a one-sided impression of Burke as an orator and a debater, which can be corrected by a study of *American Taxation*. His speeches were not always so calm, dignified, and temperate as *Conciliation with America*. The energy and wit of *American Taxation* are more typical of him. Like most of his speeches it was not prepared in advance, but spoken extemporaneously; what it loses in coördination of construction it gains in intensity of argument. It came white hot from the furnace of his convictions. It reveals his skill in detecting the weaknesses of his opponents, which long experience in the minority had taught him. It illustrates the historical method of debate which Burke applied to every question, and which appears to a less noticeable degree in *Conciliation with America*. In the latter Burke argued as if he were hoping against hope; but *American Taxation* was delivered almost a

year earlier, before he had lost hope in England's treating her colonies justly. It is full of the spirit and the conviction of a man who is hastening to warn his country of impending danger.

In the Introduction to this edition Burke's speeches and writings are not discussed in chronological order, but collected into groups according to their subjects. This method enables the student to realize exactly what Burke accomplished for the causes which he championed. An effort is also made not merely to tell the names of his speeches, but to sum up in a sentence their main arguments. The Notes are rather full, giving all the information a student needs for a complete understanding of the speech. Theoretically it is better for a student to hunt up the information, but in practice nine-tenths of the students have neither time nor opportunity for this work. The text is that of Dodsley's second edition, 1775, except that the spelling has been made to conform to that of the other books of this series.

The editor wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the help he has received from E. J. Payne's edition of Burke's *Select Works*, F. G. Selby's edition of Burke's *American Speeches*, and from Professor C. A. Goodrich's *British Eloquence*; their notes are frequently quoted. He also gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to Professor Cheesman A. Herrick and Professor Albert H. Smyth for practical advice, and to Dr. John L. Haney and David Wallerstein, Esq., for valuable criticisms of the Introduction and Notes. He hopes that this little book will help some students to appreciate the work and to honor the memory of Edmund Burke, the "Interpreter of English Liberty."

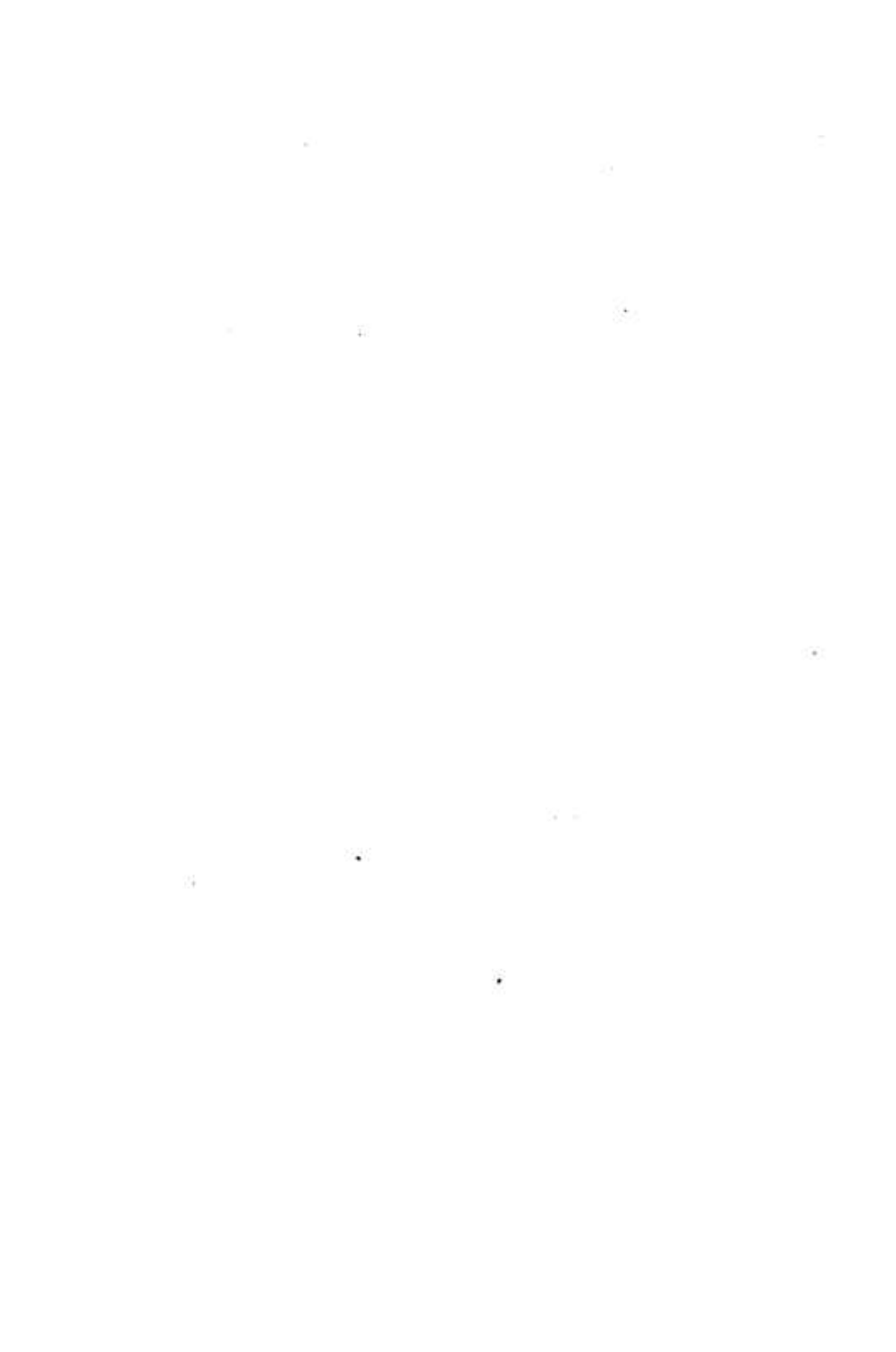
J. H. M.

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January 23, 1905

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INTRODUCTION

THE LIFE OF EDMUND BURKE

Edmund Burke was born in Dublin on January 12, 1729. His father was a lawyer with a large practice, so that he could afford to send Edmund to the good boarding school of Abraham Shackleton, a Quaker. There he formed a lasting friendship with the schoolmaster's son Richard, who was his chief correspondent for many years. In 1743 he was enrolled as a student in Trinity College, Dublin, from which he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1748. In addition to the work for the degree, he read a great deal in natural philosophy, logic, history, and poetry. He was in the habit of spending three hours each day in a public library reading miscellaneous books. Later in life, in a letter to his son, who was studying in France, Burke said: "Reading and much reading is good. But the power of diversifying the matter infinitely in your own mind, and of applying it to every occasion that arises, is far better."¹

Early in his college course Burke had purposed to follow his father's wish that he should become a lawyer, and the two years after graduation were probably spent studying in his father's office. But in 1750 he went to London to complete his legal education at the Middle Temple.

Burke soon became convinced that the study of law was too narrowing and uninteresting for his life work, although in later years he said that law was "one of the first and noblest of

¹ Burke's *Correspondence*, London, 1844, I, 426.