

BURKE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649298464

Burke by John Morley

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JOHN MORLEY

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BY

JOHN MORLEY



NEW YORK AND LONDON

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

1900

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GIFT

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NOTE.

THE present writer published a study on Burke some twelve years ago. It was almost entirely critical, and in no sense a narrative. The volume now submitted to the readers of this Series is biographical rather than critical, and not more than about a score of pages have been reproduced in it from the earlier book. Three pages (pp. 211-213) have been inserted from an article on Burke contributed by me to the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*; and I have to thank Messrs. Black for the great courtesy with which they have allowed me to transcribe the passage here. These borrowings from my former self, the reader will perhaps be willing to excuse, on the old Greek principle, that a man may once say a thing as he would have it said, *ὅς ἐὼ οὐκ ἐνδέχεται*—he cannot say it twice.

J. M.

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BURKE.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE, AND FIRST WRITINGS.

It will soon be a hundred and twenty years since Burke first took his seat in the House of Commons, and it is eighty-five years since his voice ceased to be heard there. Since his death, as during his life, opinion as to the place to which he is entitled among the eminent men of his country has touched every extreme. Tories have extolled him as the saviour of Europe. Whigs have detested him as the destroyer of his party. One indiscriminating panegyrist calls him the most profound and comprehensive of political philosophers that has yet existed in the world. Another and more distinguished writer insists that he is a resplendent and far-seeing rhetorician, rather than a deep and subtle thinker. A third tells us that his works cannot be too much our study, if we mean either to understand or to maintain against its various enemies, open and concealed, designing and mistaken, the singular constitution of this fortunate island. A fourth, on the contrary, declares that it would be hard to find a single leading principle or prevailing sentiment in one half of these works, to which something extremely adverse cannot be