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CONSIDERATIONS
ON THE
POLICY OF RENEWING
THE
EXCLUSIVE PRIVILEGES
OF THE
EAST INDIA COMPANY.

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TO
THE HONOURABLE
THE
COURT OF DIRECTORS

AND THE
OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY,
THE FOLLOWING PAGES
ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY
THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT

AND
WELL-WISHER,

The Author.

CONSIDERATIONS,

&c. &c.

IT is a practice almost universal with writers to endeavour to exalt the importance, and magnify the difficulties of that particular subject on which they happen to be employed. Whether it be that they hope, by a timely intimation of the instruction and amusement which may be derived from their book, to attract the attention of the public, or, by a pompous enunciation of hardships surmounted, intricacies unravelled, and contradictions reconciled, to overwhelm their readers with astonishment at the gigantic strength of mind which could venture on so tremendous an undertaking, I know not; but certain it is, that scarcely a work now issues from the press, of which the first sentences are not of the nature I have described.

Now although this practice is become so ge-

neral that, from a mere love of novelty, I might be justified in departing from it, and is, moreover, so thoroughly understood by the world that it has lost with every reasonable man the little weight which it may be supposed to have once possessed, yet neither of these considerations has had any influence in determining me towards the course which I intend to pursue. It is then the mere love of truth (to which, as far as lies in my power, I am determined on all occasions to adhere), which incites me to declare that the subject on which I propose to offer a few observations, is neither *the most interesting* nor *the most important that can be imagined*. Although the subject be India,—India, that inexhaustible store-house of all that is surprising, magnificent, and beautiful,—India, which, in whatever point of view it is considered, cannot fail of exciting the deepest emotions in the mind of every reflecting man; and of which the details appear to possess a kind of infinity, I yet advance no such magnificent pretensions. At the same time I cannot help thinking that, whether we consider them as connected with the prosperity and power of our countrymen at home, or the happiness of our fellow subjects abroad, the affairs of that empire are by no means undeserving our attention; more espe-

cially at this time when the question of the renewal of the Company's exclusive privileges is once more to be agitated in Parliament.

There is not, I believe, any point of equal importance with this, which has been treated with equal indifference; nor any of which the knowledge of the public at large is so defective. The documents from which alone the true state of the question (in all its bearings), could be ascertained, are unfortunately of so repulsive a magnitude that many, who have an inclination, cannot spare time to make themselves masters of their contents; while, of those to whom time is not wanting, how few can be expected, gratuitously, to undertake a voyage of discovery on so boundless and unfathomable an ocean? The consequence has therefore been, that ambitious and designing men have exerted themselves, but too successfully, to disseminate among the people their false and pernicious opinions; (for, where detection is difficult, falsehood will always be abundant); and it is to be feared that many impressions injurious to the Company have taken possession of the public mind.

For the wide diffusion of these many reasons might be assigned, but the principal I conceive

to be, First, The perseverance of the enemies of the Company, who, by the unceasing repetition of their calumnies, may have persuaded many that in assertions which they heard so frequently and so confidently repeated, there must be some degree of truth; and, Secondly, a disposition, but too prevalent among us at this time, (and still I fear increasing), to believe any report injurious to the character and conduct of men in high stations. In the humble hope of in some degree counteracting these false impressions, as well as of demonstrating that the security of our Indian empire, the happiness of the millions it contains, and the interests of the public and the Company, may be best secured by the continuance of those restrictions which now exist, the following pages are offered to the world. On a subject so inexhaustible I have but few observations to make, nor in those few can I flatter myself that much novelty will be found; but I hope that the public will not be displeased at seeing collected into a small compass some of the arguments which are most material to the right understanding of this question.

I am aware that of late years it has been the fashion to rail against *all* exclusive privileges, without any consideration of the circumstances under which they were originally granted, or of those

which may justify their continuance at this time:

Among the patriots of the day, there is no more compendious road to the popular distinction at which they aim, than to denounce the East India Company, in particular, as upheld, both at home and abroad, by a system of fraud, and violence, and usurpation. Extravagant as these assertions may appear, they have been frequently made, and sometimes perhaps believed. Year after year, the press has teemed with pamphlets to this effect; while the hustings and the Senate-house have trembled at the vehemence of the orator, declaiming on this exhaustless subject; and still the burden of their song has been, (after Adam Smith), "that exclusive companies are nuisances in every respect."*

Now, in questions of political economy, the name of Dr. Smith deservedly carries with it such authority that I cannot, without the utmost diffidence, venture to impugn any decision of his. Yet, eminently gifted as he was in every respect, and, in his own science, confessedly supreme, he was never, I believe, even by his warmest admirers, supposed to be infallible. I shall therefore endeavour to prove that the

* Wealth of Nations, v. ii. p. 512.

doctrine contained in the sentence quoted from his works, is laid down with too little limitation, for that, allowing exclusive companies, abstractedly considered, to be evils in themselves, there may be, and are, cases in which they ought to be encouraged. I am at the same time disposed to admit that this encouragement should be sparingly and cautiously afforded, and that exclusive privileges ought never to be granted except for the prevention of some greater evil which could not be avoided, or the acquisition of some positive good which could not be attained, but through their intervention.

On these grounds I am prepared to justify the continuance of the East India Company's privileges, by proving that they are necessary to the maintenance of the integrity of the empire; and that any departure from the system now in force would, in all human probability, be followed by the downfall of our sovereignty in the East, and the consequent loss of all the advantages which at present accrue from those colonies to the mother country.

It is, in the first place, a matter of indispensable necessity to consider the nature of the sovereignty exercised by us in Hindostan, as well as the habits and situation of the people, over whom our dominion extends. To the eminence

which we at present enjoy in the vast tract of country which constitutes the peninsula of India, we have been raised by the valour and exertions of our countrymen, assisted as they have been by a series of events not less extraordinary than unexpected; and the situation in which we are there placed, is unparalleled in the history of the world. It is indeed a situation on which general reasoning cannot be employed, and to which those ordinary maxims of government which, in other parts of the globe, are received as well-known and established truths, are totally inapplicable. However wise therefore, however just, however conformable to the dictates of reason and sound policy, the alterations, which some are desirous of introducing into the government of India, may appear in theory, they must yet submit to the rigid laws of imperious necessity; they must submit to be modified by considerations of the nature and circumstances of the people for whose benefit they are intended; or, instead of a blessing, they will prove a curse to India, and may ultimately occasion the downfall of England herself.

To those who contemplate, at a distance only, the immense, and orderly fabric which our eastern empire at this moment exhibits, it may appear that now, when every rival of our power is laid low, and

when from Cape Comorin to Delhi, the superiority of the British name is indisputably established, we may at last begin to remit our caution and our jealousy, and be content to govern this portion of our empire by the same principles that direct our conduct towards our other colonies; permitting this wide (and hitherto restricted), field of commerce to be laid open to British industry and enterprize. If, however, we will but take the pains to examine the interior of this extraordinary edifice, and to make ourselves acquainted with the principles on which it was erected, we cannot fail of observing that extreme caution ought to be used in the removal of any of those supports on which the strength and durability of the structure depend. To drop the metaphor; I wish to impress upon the public mind that unceasing vigilance and caution are still necessary to preserve what valour and industry have obtained; and that any measure which tends to the relaxation of these, or to the derangement of that system which has been so long and so successfully pursued, must prove injurious to both countries.

It is, I should imagine, almost unnecessary to remark that *the main principle*, by which we have hitherto been guided in our treatment of

this portion of our empire, has been the prevention of colonization. By laws and regulations, by the vigilance of government, both at home and abroad, unceasingly directed to this point, we have endeavoured (and hitherto with success), to preserve unbroken the line of distinction that separates the Englishman from the native of the east. The European inhabitants of the countries now under review, consist of the servants of the company (who certainly cannot be considered as permanent residents) and of men of various descriptions who have received permission from the Company to settle at their several Presidencies; the number of these is, at the same time, so inconsiderable that they never can have any influence on the fate of India, while their good behaviour is secured by a knowledge of the penalty to which any infraction of the laws would inevitably subject them. It is, I am convinced, to the power vested in the Directors at home, of granting or refusing at pleasure the privilege of emigration, and in the Governors abroad of expelling from their territories men of obnoxious character, that we are indebted for the security of our Indian possessions, and for the opinion of our superiority, (prevalent throughout them), on which, more than on our actual strength, our possession of

Hindustan must always depend. Supported by this we have been enabled to expel the French, and to annihilate in India the power which at no remote period of time threatened the destruction of our own. We have seen our ranks filled with native soldiers by whose fidelity we have successively triumphed over Hyder, and Tippoo, Holkar and Scindia, and extended to the remotest corner of the east the terror of our arms. By the magic of opinion it is, in fine, that a comparative handful of Europeans has so long kept in subjection the finest portion of Asia, and a population between which and that of the United Kingdom no comparison can be instituted. So long as the management of these countries is committed to the charge of an exclusive company, whose interest it must ever be to exercise a most scrupulous and unwearied diligence in this respect, colonization may be effectually prevented, or at least precluded from arising to any dangerous height. But when these salutary restraints are withdrawn, when ships are allowed to sail from every port, with every tide to India, when adventurers are no longer restrained by the impassable barrier which now shuts them out from that land of promise, what security can we have against the diffusion of new principles, and new ideas,

among the now peaceful Hindoos? May we not rather be too certain that all those who are too idle or too wicked to remain in their own country will in the course of time spread themselves over every part of India, and become the apostles of mischief and misery to those who are now flourishing and contented under a mild and equal government? Pass but a few short years, and the distinction which now supports our power will be obliterated; the principles which have so long and so successfully directed our policy will be forgotten. The now commanding Englishman and the submissive Indian will become blended into a new race, possessed of all the restlessness and ambition of the former, without his attachment to the country which gave him birth, or his respect for the laws which he received from his ancestors, and of all the cunning and cruelty of the latter, without those notions of European superiority which now incite him to fight our battles, and to perform all the duties of a loyal and affectionate subject. Should this dangerous system be once allowed to take root, it will not afterwards be in the wit of man to effect its extirpation, or to prevent the introduction, with a new race, of that impatience of foreign controul, and that desire of independence which must, in the end, lead to a convul-

sion destructive both to England and India; which will exhaust the former country, and make the latter a desert, and will be productive of scenes of bloodshed and devastation to which even in the east, history has yet presented no parallel.

The evils, indeed, which would result from any considerable admixture of the two nations, are so generally acknowledged (even by the enemies of the Company), that any further observation on that part of the subject must be unnecessary. It therefore does not appear to me that I shall be exceeding the bounds of fair argument if I consider those who are anxious for an alteration of the present system, as bound to prove, either

That, if the restraints at present existing were removed, colonization would not take place to any dangerous extent; or

That, the Company being abolished, a sufficient power might still be lodged in proper hands to prevent indiscriminate emigration; or

That the benefits, which in a commercial point of view would result to the nation, are sufficient to counterbalance the political dangers which, it is not denied, the measure of laying open the trade is calculated to produce.

That, on the removal of the restraints at pre-

sent existing, the colonization of India from England, (or, what is still worse, from other countries) would not take place, is, I believe, a position as untenable as would be the assertion that colonization ought not to be regarded as an evil. There is, and always must be, in every country, a considerable portion of its inhabitants which, from the effects of idleness, profusion, or misfortune, is desirous, upon any terms, of a change of habitation. To this class another may also be added whose only inducement is the desire, so natural to man, of improving their condition, or, perhaps the mere love of rambling and the spirit of adventure. Were these allowed an access to India, as unlimited as to the other parts of the world, it is not to be doubted that the fertility of the soil, and the little difficulty with which the necessaries and luxuries of life are there procured, (or, independent of these, the desire of visiting a country which has been so long interdicted), would attract thither the feet of many an adventurer? Among the rest, no doubt, of some, who, after attaining a considerable proficiency in England, have been sent to complete their studies in the school of morality established at Botany Bay!

That colonization, indeed, if not prevented by

the strong hand and watchful eye of power, would become general in the east, is so obvious that few have ventured to dispute it, but have chosen rather to shelter themselves under the assertion, That, even supposing the Company to be abolished, a power might still be vested *somewhere*, sufficient to prevent indiscriminate emigration, and the evils by which it would be attended. To this it might be sufficient to reply that these advocates for innovation have never yet been able to point out *where* this power is to be lodged, nor by whom it could be exercised with so much effect as by those in whose hands it is at present deposited. Should it be proposed to transfer to the crown the superintending power in question, with (for they cannot be separated), the whole patronage of India, I reply that, besides questioning the policy of thus increasing the influence and prerogatives of the crown, I doubt whether his Majesty's ministers do not already find the duties with which they are charged fully sufficient to employ their whole time and attention. Should these duties therefore be increased how are they to be executed with that regularity and dispatch which the interests of the country demand? It is besides to be observed that many causes forbid us to hope that the duty in question ever can be

executed by any body of men with greater attention and effect than it now is by the Court of Directors; who, besides having among their number men intimately acquainted with the peculiarities of India, and the system of policy most conducive to her advantage, must, from their peculiar situation, be actuated by a more anxious desire to fulfil the trust reposed in them than can ever be felt by men under other circumstances. Admitting, however, that this service should devolve on a man, or body of men, as conscientiously desirous of performing it as those to whom it is now allotted, I must be allowed to doubt whether, with an open and unrestricted trade, carried on in vessels belonging to private merchants, sailing from any port of England, or her colonies, it would be possible for *any* degree of vigilance to prevent the transmission to India of numberless individuals whose residence there ought, from every motive of prudence to be prohibited. Nor, under circumstances such as these, would the caution of the functionaries in India prove more effectual than that exercised by those at home. In order to ensure success the British residents must cease from their employments of collecting revenues, and administering justice, the soldier must quit his garrison and his camp; and these together,

forming one immense posse-comitatus, must engage in the endless task of hunting down these proscribed interlopers, for whose conveyance to Europe the whole tonnage of the country would hardly suffice. Is it not by far more probable that the governments, after a few ineffectual attempts to suppress the evil, would be reduced to a state of unwilling inactivity, and be compelled to witness, without being able to prevent, the growth of a system which they nevertheless could not but feel must one day prove fatal to their existence?

The preceding observations, it will appear, are addressed not only to those who contend for the total abolition of the company, but to others (among whom I fear his Majesty's ministers must be reckoned), who, though not insensible to the dangers of which I have taken notice, are yet in hopes of being able to avoid them by steering a middle course; and are therefore willing to allow to the public a participation in the trade with India. Before, however, they suffer themselves to be deluded by the sophistry of artful politicians, or awed by the clamors of interested speculators, I intreat them to consider well the dangerous innovation they are preparing to sanction, and the fatal consequences of which it may be productive. So

long as vessels bound to the east shall be allowed to clear out from no English port but that of London, and so long as their owners, officers and crews shall be, in a great measure, known to and under the controul of the Company, it will be possible, by a very moderate exertion of vigilance to prevent the embarkation of even a single individual without the knowledge and consent of Government; but, on the supposition that the ships of private merchants are to be permitted to sail from any of the ports of England to those of India, it is not difficult to foresee that a very different state of things must soon ensue. The Company's privileges, and the restrictions on emigration, may nominally remain, but they will be virtually abolished. Laws and regulations may be enacted, and penalties (each more severe than the preceding), be denounced, but these laws and regulations must soon become as mere a dead letter as those against profane swearing, and many others which now sleep quietly in the statute books, from the utter impossibility of putting them in execution. This is indeed the strong ground of the Company, and from which not all the efforts of their opponents will ever be able to dislodge them. A fact of which their adversaries, indeed, seem to be pretty well convinced, as, in none of their

manifestos which I have yet seen, have they thought proper to make the slightest allusion to this part of the subject. Their claim to a share in the Indian trade they choose rather to rest on the *right*, (inherent in every British subject as they maintain), of visiting every part of the world. On an assumption so monstrous I will not condescend to waste a single argument; and I trust that both in and out of Parliament a plea of this description will be treated with the contempt it merits. Let them learn (if their prejudices will allow them to listen to the truth), that this, like every other question of national policy, must be argued and decided, not on the ground of *right*, but on that of expediency.

In the view of the question which is here taken, it is no longer one of a paltry, peddling, commercial nature, but involves the happiness of nations, and the existence of the British power in India. To induce us therefore to exchange a system so advantageous for one of which *all* the dangers cannot even be foreseen, it ought at least to be shewn that there exists a reasonable prospect, (or rather a moral certainty), of great commercial advantages to be derived from laying open this trade to the public. To any one, however, previously unacquainted with the subject, it will afford matter

of surprise to find that this trade, so much coveted, and to admit the public to a share in the profits of which so many benefits are to be sacrificed, and so many dangers to be incurred, has in the language of the Directors, "gradually ceased to be of importance, *as an object of gain*, either to the Company or individuals."—The whole of the observations on this topic submitted by the Company to Government, are indeed so admirable in point of expression, and so conclusive in argument, that I will not weaken their effect by any abridgement of their contents, but will introduce them in their entire state.

"With respect to the benefits supposed to be derivable from opening the trade with India, it is, in the first place, to be observed that no material enlargement, if any enlargement at all, is to be expected in the exports of our manufactures to that quarter. The records of the Company, for two centuries, are filled with accounts of their endeavours to extend the sale of British products in India, and of the little success which has attended them. The French, Dutch, and other European nations trading thither, have equally failed in introducing the manufactures of Europe there. This was not owing to their trading chiefly in the form of companies; the Americans, who, within the last twenty

years, have entered into the Indian commerce, and traded largely, not as a company, but by numerous individuals, each pursuing his own scheme in his own way, in which course no part of the east is left unexplored, carry hardly any European manufacture thither, their chief article for the purchase of Indian goods being silver; and such has been the state of the trade from Europe to India since the time of the Romans. This state results from the nature of the Indian people, their climate and their usages. The articles of first necessity their own country furnishes more abundantly and more cheaply than it is possible for Europe to supply them. The labour of the great body of the common people only enables them to subsist on rice, and to wear a slight covering of cotton cloth, they therefore can purchase none of the superfluities we offer them. The comparatively few in better circumstances, restricted, like the rest, by numerous civil and religious customs, of which all are remarkably tenacious, find few of our commodities to their taste, and their climate, so dissimilar to ours, renders many of them unsuitable to their use: so that a commerce between them and us, cannot proceed far on the principle of supplying mutual wants. Hence, except woollens in a very limited degree, for mantles in the cold

season, and metals, on a scale also very limited, to be worked up by their own artizans for the few utensils they need, hardly any of our staple commodities find a vent among the Indians; the other exports which Europe sends to India being chiefly consumed by the European population there, and some of the descendants of the early Portuguese settlers, all of whom, taken collectively, form but a small body, in view to any question of national importance.

“What is here said does not relate to those parts of India only where the Company have settlements or factories, but to all the shores that embrace the Indian seas, from the Gulphs of Persia and Arabia to the eastern Archipelago. Many advocates for a free trade may suppose that in so vast a range, numerous positions favourable for the vent of European commodities, are still unexplored; but they are not aware that in the British settlements which themselves extend on the west to Cambay, and on the east to China, there are a number of merchants, native and European, who carry on with great spirit what is called the coasting trade of India, sending their ships to every mart, insular or continental, where any profitable commodities can be either bought or

sold. At all those marts European commodities have been tried by the enterprize of individuals. The little demand that has been found for them has been supplied; and residents settled in India, can carry into such parts the trade in European commodities, which it is now open to them to receive from this country, with more facility and advantage than merchants settled in England.”*

On this (as it appears to me), unanswerable statement, I shall not presume to offer a single comment; it ought, however, to be remembered that a participation in this trade has already been offered to the public. “In the Charter of 1793 provision was made for the export of British manufactures to India, by any individuals who might choose to embark in that trade. The Company were required to find them tonnage to a certain extent, which has always been allotted at a rate of freight cheaper outward, as well as for the returns, than the Company themselves pay, or, as the Court think, than private ships could furnish it. But in all the time that has elapsed since, very few applications, and those to a small extent, have been made for leave to export the woollens, metals, and other staples of this country, on private account; the chief appli-

* Papers respecting the Negociation, &c. page 21.

cations having been made for the freight of wine, for the consumption of Europeans: and this is not properly a British production, nor is it so much an increase in the trade as a transfer of it to the private merchants from the commanders and officers of the Company's ships, part of whose advantage used to arise from being the carriers of this commodity.”*

Listening to the complaints which are uttered on the subject of Indian monopoly (as it is termed), we might have supposed that *any* offer of this description would have been eagerly caught at; and that the only difficulty would have been to single out, from amidst the host of candidates contending for precedence, the favoured few who should be admitted to a share of the privilege. Yet it has just been shewn, on authority that cannot be disputed, how little this reasonable expectation has been realized. How then are we to account for this apathy among our merchants? for this indifference to their own interests among men to whom if any fault is to be imputed it is that of over-eagerness to embark in hazardous speculations; and who have not, in any instance neglected to extend their commerce into every creak and cranny

* Papers, page 22.

that came within their reach. It has been said by some that the regulations enacted by the Company are so oppressive as to amount to a total prohibition of all commerce, and that for this reason, and this only, they have declined to avail themselves of the indulgence granted by the legislature. That the explanation here attempted is far from satisfactory may, I think, be shewn by two arguments; the first of which is that the Company have introduced *no* regulations *of their own*, but (as has been shewn in their own words) have strictly and literally fulfilled the provisions of the act. It is indeed not to be imagined that they would have ventured to deviate from them, in danger as they were of immediate detection from those who would doubtless have been rejoiced to discover, and ready to expose any unlawful or oppressive proceeding. It is, in the next place, sufficiently obvious that were this trade really of a nature so lucrative as has been represented, and did its boasted profits exist any were but on paper, and in the heated imaginations of speculative politicians, it *must*, from the nature of things, have been carried on *to a considerable extent* under *almost any* circumstances of discouragement. Admitting therefore (what I am convinced is not the fact), that the Com-

pany *had* exerted all their influence, and those opportunities which they may be supposed to derive from their situation, to cramp and cripple this commerce, it is yet not conceivable that with such an opening as was afforded by the act of 1793, they *could* have reduced it to that state of annihilation in which we now find it, (and from which it has never for a moment revived), if even a moderate return was to be expected from it. Let it be remembered that the nature of commerce is elastic; it rises against pressure; it delights in resisting difficulties; and, when supported by the hope of gain, will overcome (I had nearly said), impossibilities. For a proof of this we need only consider the events which during the last three or four years have been taking place in the commercial world. To exclude our manufactures from the continent, the enemy of our existence has issued his anti-commercial decrees; he has enforced their execution by lining every part of his coasts with thousands of soldiers, and with tens of thousands of spies and custom-house officers: he has, in short, exhausted his malignant ingenuity in devising means for our annoyance. Yet not all these mighty exertions, not all the rigor of these laws, not even the punishment of death denounced against every one convicted of an

intercourse with England, have been able totally to extinguish our European commerce. Detected under one shape, it immediately assumes another;

————— "sua non immemor artis
"Omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum."

where force is ineffectual, it has recourse to stratagem, and, let it be opposed or thwarted as it may, will still contrive to obtain a part, at least, of the objects at which it aims. Appeal to any one of our merchants who frequent the Exchange; and not to one only but to all. Ask them how they can have the madness, in defiance of Buonaparte's proceedings, to persist in a traffic attended with so many risks? With one voice they will tell you, that so long as the nations of the continent shall continue to desire our manufactures, and to purchase them on terms favourable to us, no regulations that can be devised, no severities that can be practised will be able entirely to excluded them. We are little affected, they will say, by the loss of two adventures, when we find ourselves re-imbursed with interest by the success of the third. This state of things must remain so long as human nature shall continue what it is; and were the

same causes at work in Asia, they must, long before this time, have produced similar effects. Were the natives of the last mentioned quarter as desirous of obtaining our manufactures and other products of our industry, as we know those of Europe to be, and were there an equal profit to be derived from either traffic, it is not all the rules and orders of a Company, did they possess ten thousand times their present authority, it is not all the acts of a British Parliament, nor all the vigilance of the British navy, that could have restrained the enterprise of our merchants. We see that Buonaparte, with all his power, and all his terrors, has failed of success in his attempts against *one* trade, while *the other* has languished and died, (if that may be said to have died which never had existence), under restrictions not only comparatively, but positively trifling. Let us suppose that Buonaparte, or the American government, had been willing to allow an intercourse to be carried on between their dominions and ours, under restraints not more severe than those imposed by the Act of 1793 on the private trade with India, would not our commerce in an instant have revived? would not our manufacturing towns have resounded with the bustle of preparation, and our ports have been filled with innumerable

vessels preparing for, or returning from their voyages to distant countries. Should we not, in short, have disregarded or forgotten so paltry an impediment, and have carried on a trade, nearly or quite as extensive as if it had not existed? And yet, of what might be effected, under similar circumstances, in the Asiatic world, scarcely a solitary speculator has ventured to make an experiment. A fact for which it is impossible to account but by acknowledging that there exists an inherent difference between the two trades of Europe and Asia; that, from the one there *is* a profit to be derived, while from the other there *is none*. The merchants of Birmingham, of Glasgow, and Liverpool may summon assemblies, pass resolutions, and present petitions; but, with facts such as I have noticed staring us in the face, it appears to me as at least questionable whether his Majesty's ministers would not prove themselves more truly the friends of these traders by denying, than by granting the boon for which they are so clamorous. To them, as individuals, I bear not the slightest ill-will; I lament, in common with the rest of my countrymen, the difficulties under which both they and their commerce are now labouring, and would cheerfully (if it were in my power), point out some mode of relief;

but out of pure regard to them I would withhold the present object of their desires, as I would a knife, or any other dangerous weapon, from the hands of a child. The man and the child may fret and pout awhile, but in both the age of reason will at last arrive, and teach them to be grateful for the kind, though apparently severe, precaution which deprived them of the means of self-destruction. "The provisions of the Act of 1793," Lord Melville says, "have not hitherto answered the expectations either of the legislature or the merchants," but, of those who form unreasonable and extravagant expectations, who is to be blamed for the disappointment? The project of affording relief to our manufacturers by opening the trade to India is, and in spite of Acts of Parliament, ever must be illusory; since that trade, from the causes assigned in the letter from the chairmen just quoted, must always continue what it is, and ever has been, languid and unprofitable. These causes, it must likewise be remembered, originating as they do in the opinions and habits of the natives of the east, are such as not even "the ardour of individual enterprize," (whatever other miracles it may perform), can ever be expected to surmount.

To the accusation so often brought against

the Company, that they have not carried this trade to the extent of which it is capable, no more satisfactory answer need be given than a statement of the low prices fetched in India by the articles which they *do export*; for, were there any scarcity of commodities, the price of those which are exposed to sale must be prodigiously enhanced. Of the charms in use among the Hindoos, and of their wonderful effects, many marvellous stories have been related; but, it appears to me that they must have been able to fix upon the Company a spell of more than ordinary potency, whose operation has compelled them, year after year, to dispose of their goods at less than prime cost in a market where the competition of buyers must be excessive, if, as has been asserted, the supply falls so wretchedly short of the demand.

There is besides another consideration which ought to render us extremely cautious how we listen to any proposal for laying open the trade of India; and that is the danger to which we must inevitably expose our intercourse with China. I say *inevitably* because it appears to me that to resign the first mentioned traffic, and hope to preserve the last is as absurd as would be an attempt to defend the citadel after the out-works have surrendered. To remove the

restrictions on the trade with India is to place that with China in as dangerous a predicament as I conceive my watch to be in when, in the midst of a crowd, I find the chain in the hands of a pick-pocket. They are so inseparably linked together, that the fate of one cannot but be that of both. It cannot have escaped the notice of the public that, with all the precautions now employed, and with all the means of preserving tranquillity possessed by the supra-cargoes at Canton, it is not always possible to prevent offence being given to that singularly capacious and conceited people. Within these few years more than one instance of misunderstanding has arisen, and, more than once, our commercial intercourse has been suspended. In the event, therefore, of private ships being allowed to range the Indian ocean at pleasure, it is difficult to imagine that China alone can remain exempt from their visits. Laws may indeed be made to interdict their approach, but these the prospect of gain, and the chance of impunity will incite them to elude; nor is it to be supposed that men, who have made the circuit of half the globe to reap nothing but loss and disappointment, will hesitate to extend their voyage a few degrees farther in the hope of at last disposing of their cargo, and procur-

ing one in return, for which, in England, they are assured of a profitable sale. When such temptations invite them thither, what laws can have the power to prevent their entering the ports of China, or what precautions, when they have gained admission, can guard against those disputes which must inevitably occur between them and the natives of that empire? disputes which will, in a short time, ensure our total exclusion from their ports, and the ruin of that trade from which, omitting all other advantages, our revenues at present derive such prodigious benefit. To those, therefore, who ask, as some have done, Why, if the trade to India *be* of the unprofitable description that has been represented, such unwillingness should be felt to admit others to a participation of it? the Company may reply, "We are anxious that the trade with India should remain upon its present footing, because, of however little value it may appear in one point of view, there are others in which it must be considered as of infinite importance. We object to its being laid open, not from any commercial jealousy, but because we are convinced that from the admission of the private trader, colonization, (with its inseparable train of fatal consequences), must ensue, while we are at the same time threatened with the loss of

that commerce with China, of which, both to us and the nation at large, the advantages are incalculable. Our anxiety, therefore, for the preservation of the trade with India, although in a point of view strictly commercial it may be productive of no benefit to us, is not surprising; but by you no such plea can be urged. It is we then who have some right to be surprised at the pertinacious desire you express for a share in a trade so little advantageous; nor can we, in a word, easily assign any motive for your eagerness to

"Rob us of that which nought enriches *you*,
But makes *us* poor indeed."

Among all the changes which have been projected, it has never, I believe, been expected or pretended that a purer administration of justice, or a government better calculated to secure the prosperity and happiness of its inhabitants, could be devised for India. Throughout the whole of their provinces the Company have established one uniform system of administration, which, while it protects the person and property of the native, is cautious not to offend his prejudices; and the fruit of which has been the

continuance of tranquillity, with fewer interruptions than this country ever experienced under its native princes. Of these benefits and blessings the Indians are fully sensible, and have, on every occasion, given proofs of their gratitude and affection to that government from whence they are derived. An appeal to these facts will, I conceive, afford a sufficient reply to those who have represented the sovereignty exercised by the Company as "a solecism in politics," "an anomaly in government," "a kind of imperium in imperio," which, in times so enlightened as the present, ought not to be tolerated. In questions of this nature we can admit a reference to no standard but that of practical utility. If, indeed, we are to go beating about for solecisms, and hunting down anomalies, I know no region in which that kind of game is more abundant than in the constitution of England; notwithstanding which, I believe few who have experienced its good effects, and the happiness of living under it, are anxious for its destruction. Were we to lend an ear to every shallow-pated reformer who points out defects and inconsistencies, and to exchange what *we know* to be good for something which

he tells us would be better, we should soon be in a situation to apply to ourselves the famous inscription on the tomb of an Italian nobleman,

Stavo ben; per star meglio, sto qui.
I was well; I wished to be better: here I lie!

It is, without doubt, a piece of advice, which cannot be too frequently repeated, that it is better to adhere to the old standard, even at the risk of being accused of prejudice and bigotry, than to take up with any new-coined notions; glittering indeed to the eye, but wanting the stamp of experience, which alone ought to render them current, and entitle them to be received into general circulation.

My readers will be pleased to observe that I have purposely omitted all reference to the financial and other benefits derived by the state from the East India Company, (of which, however, neither the number nor importance is small), for, although in the consideration of details they must not be omitted, yet, in the view of the subject which I have taken, their importance is comparatively trifling. From the same motive I have avoided crowding my pages with commercial calculations, which serve, in general, rather to perplex

than to discover the truth; or with columns of figures, which in skillful hands (a Reviewer's for instance!) may be so moulded, and fashioned, as to yield support to almost any doctrine. There is, however, one circumstance of which, misplaced as it may appear to some in a work of this nature, I cannot prevail on myself to omit the mention. It may perhaps be my misfortune, but I must own that I cannot behold without complacency, the spectacle of so many millions of human beings pursuing their occupations, and reaping the fruits of their labours, under the mild and upright jurisdiction of the British laws; and enjoying profound tranquillity and repose, while the rest of the world is convulsed by a tempest, of which no human foresight can discern the termination. It is, to a good mind, a refreshing spectacle to turn away from the bloodshed and desolation which overspread Europe, to the more pleasing contemplation of the happiness of Asia. A scene, such as we are there presented with, I think no man can behold without some feelings of respect for the people who have had the good sense and moderation to enjoy the blessings that are offered them, and of gratitude to the government under which they have attained so many inestimable advantages.

To the first it is due, as a small return for their fidelity to us, that we should not, upon light grounds, introduce any change of government which, by affording to private ships the uncontrouled range of the Indian ocean, may expose to outrage and insult the defenceless inhabitants of its shores; and to the latter that we should not, without even the imputation of misconduct, deprive them of the controul of those territories which they alone have acquired; which have flourished under their management, and of which they are still able and willing to secure the possession to the crown of England. That Parliament has the *power* of introducing *any* alteration it may think proper, no one ever did, or ever will attempt to deny; but that, because it has the power it therefore has the *right*, is a position more conformable with the policy and practise of the French than with any principle which I hope ever to see acted upon by an assembly of British Senators. Let them, before they determine, allow themselves time to consider whether by the supercession of *one* government, to which the Hindoos have always been accustomed to look up with reverence and respect, they may not introduce into *their* minds

a revolution unfavourable to *all*; let them act with deliberation, and not hastily lend their sanction to a measure of which the advantages are not less problematical than the justice.

There is still one other consideration, which I trust will have its due weight with all ranks of the community, and with which I will bring these imperfect observations to a close. Great as has been its success in almost every country I believe that French intrigue has never found a more favourable field for its exertions than India. They have here, but too successfully, exerted their abilities in that kind of warfare to which the genius of their nation seems peculiarly well adapted. They have insinuated themselves into the councils, and confidence, of the native princes, in some of whom they have excited a hatred of our name, and a desire for our destruction. By them have been formed those confederacies which it has demanded all our skill in politics to baffle; and by them have been organized, and led to the field those numerous and well appointed armies, which in many a well contested battle have disputed with us the empire of the east. By the blessing of Providence, these exertions have ended only in the discomfiture of their authors; we have

resisted, and subdued every effort that has been made against us, and have finally succeeded in rooting out of the peninsula every vestige of these enemies of our name and nation. It is not perhaps too much to say that in none of the native Courts is there, at this moment, a Frenchman to be found; nor, under the present constitution of the Company, and their vigilant superintendence of the persons allowed to visit their possessions, is it practicable for even a single individual of that nation to set his foot on Indian soil. Defeated however as our enemy has been in all his machinations, and driven with disgrace from these much coveted possessions, it is notorious (even from his own avowal) that he will make the most gigantic efforts to regain the ground he has lost. From his exaltation he still looks down, with a mixture of envy and impatience, on the regions of India; unceasingly meditating the infliction of a fatal blow on our resources in that quarter, and, through them, on our national prosperity and power. The first step towards the attainment of this object of his ambition, he knows must be the introduction of his emissaries at the native Courts, who may scatter among the people the seeds of disaffection, and pave the way for the reception

of those mighty armies by which he threatens to overwhelm our dominions beyond the Ganges. The difficulties and dangers which may oppose the execution of this tremendous project, I am so far from intending to depreciate that I hope and believe that any attempt of this nature on the part of the French Emperor (if skillfully and resolutely opposed by us), would fail of success. Yet, on the other hand, acquainted as we are with the character of the man who meditates this enterprize, and with the incalculable resources which fortune has placed at his command, would it not be in us the height of madness to neglect any of those precautions which may contribute to our safety? If, at a moment like this, we will not exert our energies, if, when the enemy is preparing for the assault, the garrison reposes in indolent security, or, not content with even that, employs itself in breaking down the barriers that are already in existence, is there, or can there be, any reasonable prospect that we shall long be able to hold out? By abolishing the company, or by weakening its powers, we at once repeal, or render nugatory, those regulations which have so long secured India to us, and to India herself the enjoyment of tranquillity. By allowing private ships to

clear out from every port in England (at a time too when our country swarms with the emissaries of France), we shall open a door through which it will be impossible to prevent the passage of those, who will do their best to fill our territories with fire and the sword. It is not to be conceived how far, by the well combined, and well directed efforts of even a few individuals, the contagion may spread; nor in how short a time we may be again obliged to draw the sword in our own defence, and to incur a second time those dangers which we have once most happily surmounted. Should this event, so much to be deprecated, ever occur, I cannot doubt that the valour of our countrymen would again deliver us from the toils of our enemies; but, even if we could be assured of final success, (which, from the uncertainty of every thing human, we never can be), I should yet think it the part of true wisdom, rather to strengthen, by all practicable means, what we already possess, than to compromise its security by the adoption of those innovations which, without a full consideration of the subject, some have so incautiously recommended. Let but the question be viewed *in*

all its bearings, and we shall all agree in the opinion that the prosperity of *the one* country, the security of *the other*, and the commerce of *both*, may be best promoted by the continuance of the privileges at present vested in the East India Company.

FINIS.