

THE  
EAST-INDIA COMPANY

AND

THE MARITIME SERVICE.



LONDON:  
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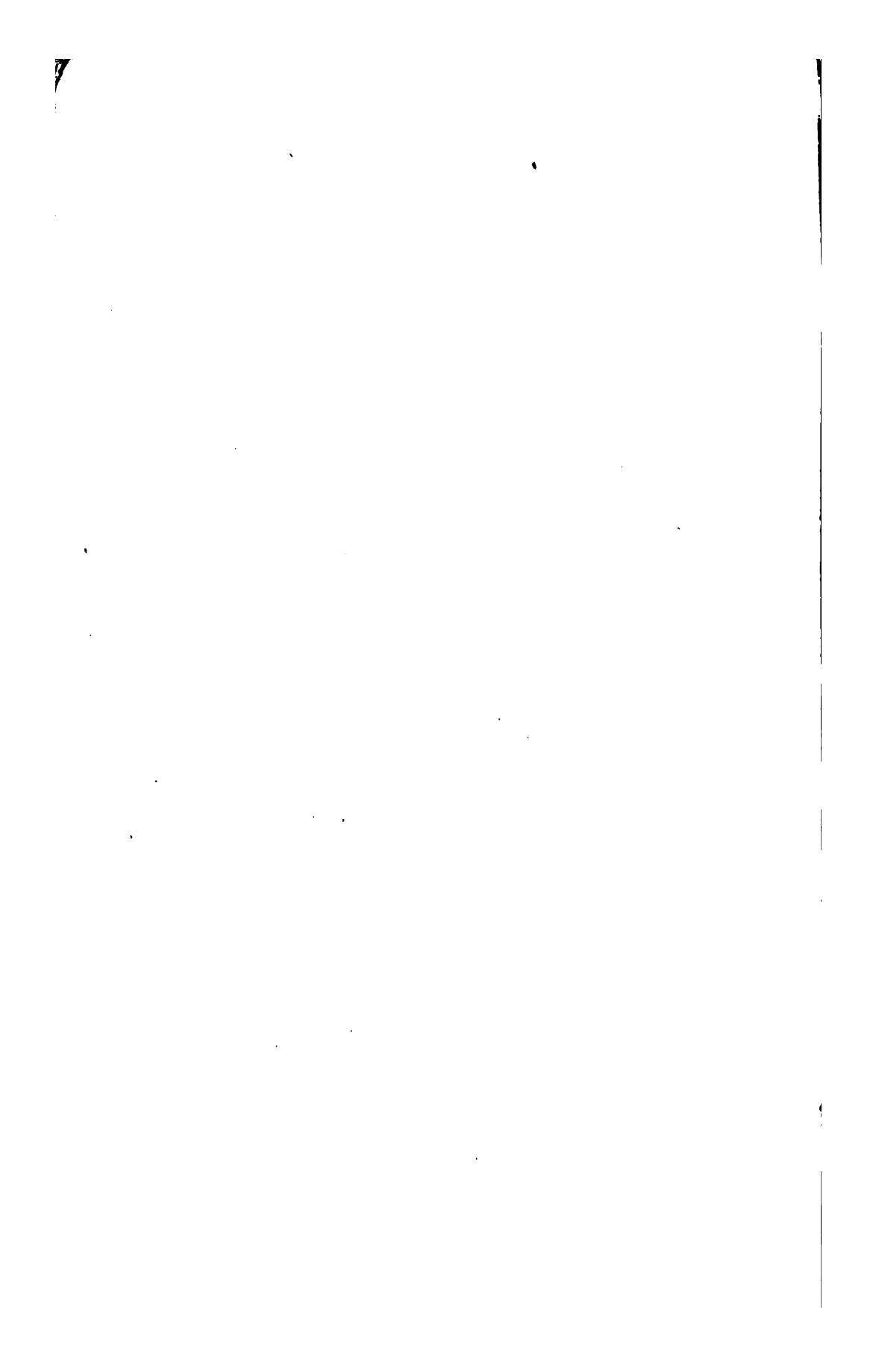
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THE following pages are the fruits of an inquiry instituted by the writer into the facts which bear upon the present dispute between the Court of Directors and the Maritime Service. As that dispute will perhaps be decided ultimately in the Court of Proprietors, he considered it a duty incumbent upon every one who might be called upon to vote upon the question to make himself master of its merits. He has endeavoured to do this for himself, and the result of his investigation is now before the public, to whose judgment he submits it. As the name of so humble a Proprietor could add nothing to the weight of his arguments, he leaves them to be estimated at their intrinsic value.



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SUCH an event as the annihilation of the commercial character of the East-India Company could not take place without injurious consequences to the interests of many. The prudence and good feeling displayed by the authorities under whose superintendence this great change has been effected, have greatly mitigated the inconveniences with which it was fraught to individuals; but in this, as in all similar cases, it has been found impossible to answer the expectations of all whose interests were affected, and it is a subject of regret that among the dissatisfied are to be found the officers of the Maritime Service.

One of them, on behalf of himself and his brethren, has published "an Appeal to his Majesty's Government and the Honourable East-India Company for Justice to the Claims of the Honourable East-India Company's Maritime Service to Compensation." The title is somewhat unfair, for it would seem to imply that all compensation had been refused by the Court of Directors. This, however, is not the fact; compensation has been

proposed, though not to the extent to which the officers deem themselves entitled. The question, therefore, between them and the Court is merely one of degree. It can scarcely be doubted, that the Directors are sincerely disposed to do justice to the valuable body of officers with whom they are unfortunately at issue. Neither the Court nor the Company at large have any interest adverse to that of the Maritime Service, and if the Directors feel any prejudice, it must be in favour of those whose uniform good conduct they have had the best opportunities of observing ; they are, at least, entitled to the praise of good intention, and though the parties believing themselves aggrieved may feel warmly, they should express them decorously. It is to be lamented that the Author of the "Appeal" has failed in this point. Literary composition is so foreign to the habits of a sailor, that when he ventures upon it we are not surprised to find him steering a somewhat wild course. On this ground, the merely literary sins of the author of the "Appeal" claim forbearance, and the reader might forgive his rambling and unconnected mode of discussing his subject. His extraordinary image of a doctrine smothering a voice (p. 40); his comparison of the two houses of parliament to a "beacon fire," a "meteor light," and even the "day-spring upon high" (p. 50), with a variety of other figures which, in the language of Junius, "dance through

his pages in all the mazes of metaphorical confusion." Such things, together with his wild appeals "to the Company—to the King's Ministers—to the Parliament—to the nation"—to everybody—might be passed over with a smile. But his abuse of the Court of Directors evinces something worse than the deficiency of taste. That hapless body is never mentioned but to be reviled. It is an "ungrateful Court," an "imperial Court;" its members are charged with "pettifogging quibbling"—with quibbling "in a manner that an Old Bailey pleader would blush to practise even for his ruffian clients"—with having recourse to "shabby and discreditable shuffling;" to "miserable quirks and sophistical cunning." These charges, however, are comparatively light ones, for we are told further, that "the Lords of India" (the Directors) "seek to gratify their own avarice or fantasy at the expense of their servants, towards whom they display "gross injustice and heartless disregard;" they are guilty of "despotism," and "iron-handed oppression," and "atrocious tyranny." Indeed, it seems they are nothing better than dæmons; they pounce upon certain unhappy persons, and having "struck down their prosperity," and "crushed them to the earth," not only "scorn in contemptuous silence the appeals of their victims," but with a refinement of cruelty, "still hold them in agony and torture with unrelenting grasp," as the enemy of the black

beetle having laid him on his back, sucks out his vitals at leisure ; they frame conditions, “ *the cruelty of which the Spanish Inquisition alone, with all its instruments of torture, could surpass.* ”—conditions, “ drawn up with the skill of a Machiavel, and with *more than his subtle refinement of cruelty and persecution;* ” conditions so horrible that the author of the Appeal indignantly demands, “ had the person a heart who invented these agonies for numerous fellow-creatures ? Was it not petrified ? ” These questions cannot be satisfactorily answered without dissection ; and as the performance of this operation upon living men would be an act of cruelty almost as great as that of framing such conditions, the author does not recommend it, but leaves the matter still in doubt : he concludes, however, that “ at least an ossification must be forming.”

The fury with which this writer assails the Court of Directors is remarkably contrasted with his courteous and flattering language towards all other persons. Every political party and almost every individual belonging to each party is panegyricized—Whigs and Tories—Conservatives and Radicals—the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Hume—Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Buckingham alike receive the meed of praise—“ Liberalism,” we are told, “ is inconsistent with robbery and spoliation,” and “ Conservatism equally revolts from such things.” The Legislature is “ enlightened”



—the nation is “generous”—to exalt the two houses of Parliament figure upon figure is heaped mountain high—the members from Ireland are “open-hearted”—and those from Scotland “true as steel.” His Majesty’s Ministers are models for all ministers, and the Opposition exactly what an opposition should be. In fact, with the exception of the proscribed Court of Directors, whom he hates with a perfect hatred, the author of the Appeal comes to the conclusion of the old song,

“The world is good, and the people are good,  
And we’re all good fellows together.”

The reason of his optimism it is not difficult to discover. He has made up his mind that the Directors cannot be expected greatly to modify their determination, he therefore indulges freely in the pleasure of abusing them; but having some hope in other quarters, he plasters with the thickest flattery every human being who can by possibility have any influence in deciding the question in which he is interested. This course, however creditable to his tact as an advocate, is scarcely consistent with the straightforward manliness of a sailor. He deceives himself, too, in supposing that his cause is to be assisted by the coarse abuse of those who differ from him, and equally coarse flattery of those whom he hopes to induce to agree with him. The claims of the Maritime Service must, and will be decided on their own merits, and a brief statement of the grounds upon which

the question rests will be sufficient to exculpate the Court of Directors from the odious charges so unreservedly made against them by the author of the Appeal.

The commerce of the East-India Company was carried on in ships of two descriptions. A part of them were the property of the Company. The officers in these were appointed by the Directors, and rose according to seniority. Other ships employed in the Company's service were the property of private parties, and were chartered by the Company for a certain number of voyages. The officers of these ships were not appointed by the Court of Directors, and they did not rise by seniority, as in the Company's own ships; they were appointed by the owners from a list of qualified persons, the Directors, of course, exercising the power of approval or rejection. It will be seen that these two branches of the Maritime Service were in many respects distinct, and that when the Company ceased to be a commercial body, their respective claims to compensation would be widely different.

No inconsiderable portion of the "Appeal" is employed in proving that the latter class of officers were in the service of the Company: but the labour is thrown away, because, in the first place, the phrase "Service of the Company" is equivocal; and, secondly, other considerations must be taken into the discussion of the question of compensa-

tion. It is urged that the Court claimed a right of summoning the commanders and officers of a homeward-bound ship to attend them within a given time after they ceased to be in active service, and of calling them from any part of the kingdom to sit upon Courts of Inquiry; that in some instances they have called upon the officers to serve under the Crown, as in the cases of the Mutiny at the Nore and of the threatened French Invasion, and that they cheerfully obeyed. What Englishman would not? But, independent of all national feeling, here, as in the former case, the refusal to comply would have put an end to all chance of ever being again afloat under the Company; obedience would therefore be yielded in the hope of securing future advantages. Had the officers refused to comply with the wishes of the Court, the Court might, and doubtless would, have withheld its approval of any future appointment of those officers. The service was too valuable to be surrendered lightly, and therefore prudence, as well as feeling, dictated compliance. The author of the Appeal says, "If the Court had taken up a Newcastle Collier, and sent her out to the Red Sea, and ordered any of their officers to serve in her, they must have obeyed." They *would* have obeyed; and so they would if the Court had taken up a wherry and ordered any officers to proceed in her to Putney or to Greenwich, because it was clearly for their interest to obey.

Some stress appears to be laid upon the fact that tests of qualification were established by the Court of Directors, and that the list of qualified persons was kept at the India House. Could it for a moment be supposed that the Court would intrust their valuable cargoes to any individuals who might be nominated by the owners, without being satisfied of their qualifications for the charge? And as to the other point, was not the India House the most convenient place for keeping the list of officers? Surely nothing can be inferred from these facts in any way to affect the question of compensation.

The author of the "Appeal" here hits upon an illustration of his case with which he is vastly pleased, and to which he attaches great importance. It is this: that the officers in this branch of the Maritime Service "*stand in exactly the same relation to the Company as those clergymen do to the Church who have been presented to livings or ecclesiastical benefices by lay-patrons in whom the advowsons are vested.*" He is so delighted with this supposed analogy, that he is determined to carry it completely out, and he does so with a perseverance and success equal to honest Fluellen in his parallel between Monmouth and Macedon. The ship-owners are patrons—this may pass readily enough; but when called upon to admit that the ships are ecclesiastical benefices, and the officers clergymen, we hesitate a little, like the brothers

of Lord Peter, when required to believe that a slice from a sixpenny loaf was a prime cut from a shoulder of mutton. But our faith must not be staggered here, for we have something more wonderful to come. The analogy must be perfect in all its parts. The Church has its hierarchy—so must the Indian Navy; and, accordingly, we are forthwith informed that the Directors are bishops; and the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, archbishops! Now let us examine this parallel, which gives so much satisfaction to its author. The patron of a living is restricted in his choice; so is the ship-owner. The patron can present none but a person in holy orders; the ship-owner none but a person duly qualified according to the standing rules of the service. The patron presents his clerk to the bishop; and, if there be no legal or moral objection, the bishop gives him institution. The ship-owner presents his officer to the Court, and, if approved, he is sworn in. Even here the resemblance begins to be dubious. The bishop is bound to have a good reason for rejecting a clerk presented to him for institution: while the Court might, if they should choose, reject an officer from mere "fantasy," to borrow an expression from the author of the Appeal, and no one could question their proceeding. But we will let this pass, and concede at once that, thus far, there is some loose analogy between the two cases;—but here it ends. What has the

patron of the benefice given to the clergyman?—  
A FREEHOLD—that of which he cannot be deprived but for some crime,—and then only in due course of law. What has the ship-owner given to the officer whom he patronizes? A profitable but *temporary* employment—an engagement which will terminate in a few months, and may or may not be renewed according to circumstances. Proud as the author evidently is of his parallel, it does not go upon four legs, nor even upon three. The clergyman receives his appointment for life, and the bishop, having once admitted, cannot dispossess him except in virtue of the judgment of a court of law. The commander of a ship received his appointment for a brief term, and might, at a future time, be rejected by the Court of Directors for any reason, or for none. The situation of a maritime officer when afloat, bore no analogy to that of a clergyman under any circumstances. When not afloat, he was in the situation of an unbeneficed clergyman—both were members of a select body, from whom certain qualifications were required, and to whom certain beneficial appointments were appropriated. To follow out the parallel would be fatal to the claims of the Maritime Service, yet it will not be without its use if it answers the purpose of warning the service to beware of an injudicious advocate. It is with this view only that this unfortunate illustration is dwelt upon, and not for the purpose of establishing

that which, unhappily, it does establish, that the officers have no claim to compensation at all. If, in consequence of the ascendancy of certain opinions, the Established Church were to be abolished, justice would require either that the rights of the beneficed clergy should be preserved during their lives, or that compensation should be made, equal to the value of that of which they were deprived; but justice would not require that any compensation should be made to the unbeneficed clergy. They have, under the existing system, the chance of obtaining preferment, but nothing more; and as this chance could not properly be made the subject of compensation, neither can it in the case of the officers of the maritime service, who are in a similar situation. This, of course, does not apply to the officers of the Company's own ships.

The inconvenience which is felt by the Maritime Service is the result of the abandonment of the Company's trade; but this abandonment was not the voluntary act of the Company, it was forced upon them by the Legislature. The Company had not foreseen this event, and could not even contemplate it as within the limits of probability. But it was apparent to them, as it must have been to all, that the signs of the times indicated a change, and the Company endeavoured as much as possible to prepare for it. Ships were employed only from voyage to voyage, and although it is said the Officers considered this as a temporary

arrangement till the renewal of the Charter, yet the very existence of such an arrangement must have warned them that no one was aware of the terms upon which the Charter would be renewed. Had the Company continued to trade after their exclusive rights were abolished, it may be doubted whether it would have been upon the former grand scale. In the "Appeal" there are assertions on both sides; and the reader may therefore choose those which please him best.

Now as to the nature and amount of the proposed compensation. The system of allowing gratuities is reprobated, while pensions are defended by the Author of the "Appeal," to an extent which is absolutely startling. The commercial assets of the Company are assigned to India, burdened by their commercial obligations. It would be unfair to bar the just claims of any parties by a reference to the heavy burthen which their admission would entail upon that country; but still it will be the duty of those with whom the decision of the present question rests, to take care that liberality is exercised so as not to inflict injustice upon the already heavily taxed natives of India. Let us pause for a moment, and consider what an immense additional charge was imposed upon India by the enactments of the last Session of Parliament. It has been ascertained from individuals competent to form an estimate, that the sum required to give effect to the scale proposed by the Court of Directors for



the Maritime Branch, will amount to no less than £400,000 ; while, if the plan of the " Committee of Commanders and Officers, or of the Officers of the service," (for there appears to be but little difference between them) be adopted, it will require more than double the amount; and this be it remembered in behalf of individuals, very many of whom can only appeal to the generosity of the Company.

Then as to the principle, or rather the no principle, upon which it is proposed that these pensions should be granted. If this scheme be substituted for the plan of the Court, a commander with a fortune of £30,000 or £40,000 would be entitled to a pension equally with his comrade totally destitute of pecuniary means—a commander who has performed only one voyage would be on a par with one who has performed ten voyages, each of which voyages is estimated in the Appeal at £5,000 at the least; a man who has served to an advanced period of life would claim no more than the stripling who has the world before him, and who, whatever success might befall him in after-life, would still have a right to retain his pension. Now really this would be " too bad."

The officer of the service says, " it is admitted by all the eminent and experienced merchants of the kingdom, that had the Company continued to pursue the China trade even in common with the rest of His Majesty's subjects, their monopoly

would have been virtually renewed." Any one who has attended the discussions at the India House while the Charter question was under consideration, will be aware that such an admission was never made, but that a contrary opinion was held on both sides of the General Court, an opinion subsequently confirmed by that of eminent and experienced merchants. It is the more important that this point should be clearly understood, for if this assertion of the " officer of the service " be disposed of, we get rid also of the calculations of loss founded upon it. It is in fact perfectly absurd, to suppose that the Company could have driven the skill, the enterprize, and the capital of the British merchant out of the China market; and such clearly is the view of the Directors, for in the Report of the Finance and Home Committee, dated the 7th May last, just printed, they distinctly state, that in the case of a change from an exclusive to a competitive trade, " the privileges of the commanders and officers would not only have been reduced in value, but the chances of employment under the Company would have been lessened in the proportion that their shipping might have been reduced."

But the surrender of the Company's commercial charter did not affect the Maritime Service alone. It also threw out of employment a large proportion of the Home Establishment.

It is unnecessary to enter upon a discussion as

to whether the scale of pensions for the Home Establishment is, or is not, too liberal. That it is liberal every one must admit, and worthy of kind and good masters. But as to a comparison being drawn, or a similarity established between the two branches, it could only impose upon those who are totally unacquainted with either one or the other of the services. When did we ever before, in the course of their respective careers, hear of this analogy? Where is the Commodore or Commander who would not have regarded it as an affront to be declared upon a footing with a clerk on the Home Establishment? Where is the clerk or even head of a department who, after a long course of active and meritorious service, finds himself possessed of as much as is stated to be the ordinary profit of one voyage to a commander? The means of realizing a competency are positively denied to a clerk, a mere maintenance being all that is allowed him, and a pension when worn out his only prospect. While it is a notorious fact that large fortunes were made in a few years by commanders, by whom seats in the direction of our affairs, or in the legislature, and a prominent station in society, are constantly filled.

Let us look at the situation of the Maritime Service, and enquire how it has been remunerated. The officers were nominated not by the Company but by the ship-owners, thus giving the latter an

opportunity of forwarding the fortunes of their own relatives and connexions. This patronage was of enormous value, and was a positive boon, not merely to the owners but to the commanders and officers. To the one class it gave power, to the other emolument: the owner exercised a most gratifying privilege in recommending an officer, but the beneficial interest resulting from that recommendation was enjoyed by the person recommended. The value of appointments in the Maritime Service was notoriously such as to make them objects of keen desire: the nominal pay was small, but a large amount of free tonnage enabled a commander after a few voyages to retire with an ample fortune. It would be almost presumptuous in one who never participated in these sweets to offer an opinion as to the value of a single voyage; it will be the safer way to take the estimate of the author of the "Appeal." He cannot reasonably object to an opponent adopting his own statements—to him then let us apply for information. At page 38 he gives, on the authority of an old report, £5,000 or £6,000 as the probable profit of a voyage, and he adds, on his own responsibility, that it can "be proved by the books of commanders, that both then and since, even very recently and up to the last moment, a voyage was worth fully the latter sum, and in many instances *twice that amount, and more*, has been realized by a single voyage." Does this tend to

shew that the Maritime Service have much to complain of? A service of about eighteen months was, according to the author of the "Appeal," usually remunerated with a sum of £5,000 or £6,000, in some instances, according to the same authority, with as much as £10,000 or £12,000. Was ever service so paid in any other instance? This question is not put invidiously: the commanders had appointments of great trust and responsibility; they discharged their duties with credit to themselves and advantage to the Company; they deserved to be paid liberally, and they were paid *most* liberally. We grudge them not one rupee of the property they have amassed in the service; but it is too much, after opportunities such as they have enjoyed, and such as no other men ever possessed, to clamour for compensation as though they had been labouring for a mere subsistence.

Now let us turn to the members of the Home Establishment. The emoluments of many of them, for years after they entered the house, were insufficient to meet their expences; after they passed this period of probation, their rise was gradual and slow, and they could ultimately look for nothing beyond the means of maintaining a respectable place in society. No splendid prizes glittered before their eyes—no visions of wealth animated their youth—nor did the reality console their age. To save was not easy, to accumulate a fortune

impossible ; another and humbler class were labouring but for the hour that was passing over them, and the deprivation of employment would at once have reduced them to destitution. To such of its servants, to those who can make but little provision for the future, and to those who can make none at all, the Company has been accustomed to afford a retiring allowance proportioned to the advantages which they enjoyed in the establishments. This was known and looked forward to as a resource, when age and infirmity should render their retirement necessary. The unexpected change in the character of the Company has rendered a large part of the Home Establishment unnecessary. To turn these men upon the world without provision would have been both unjust and cruel. The law allows them compensation, and the Court have bestowed it ; but this would not justify extending the same rate of compensation to the Maritime Service. The members of the Home Establishment were regularly and constantly engaged in the service of the Company, the maritime officers only occasionally. The income of the former was certain, that of the latter contingent. The salaries of the Home Establishment were moderate, the emoluments of the Maritime Service magnificent. The one class was under certain circumstances entitled to retire with a part of their salaries ; the other was expected to provide for the future out of the ample

means afforded them while in actual service. The claims of the two parties therefore stand on quite different grounds, and if the Court had refused all compensation to the Maritime Service with the exception of the commanders and officers of their own ships they would have done no wrong; they have, however, proposed compensation, and on a liberal scale.

But, instead of being grateful that they have done so much, the service are complaining that the Court have offered too little, and claims are set up which never could by possibility be admitted. Their organ observes that "it is taken as a principle in the Court's scale, that each commander is entitled to perform five voyages, and a single voyage is calculated at £2,000, but five voyages are valued at only £5,000. This," he exclaims, "is strange arithmetic;" and he forthwith proceeds to evince his superior skill in that useful science by demonstrating that five times two are ten, and he is right according to Cocker. But he is not right in arguing, that because a commander receives £2,000 for a single voyage, he ought to receive £10,000 for five, for this is a matter which is not to be settled solely by the multiplication table. If a commander has five voyages to perform, the probability that he will perform one of these is considerable, but the probability of his performing a second is diminished, and it is still further diminished as to a third, and so on to the

pamphlet put forth by their advocate were meant to be of a jocose character; those, for instance, where he talks of the service being reduced to utter destitution and beggary, after having informed us of the nature of their profits, and announced moreover, that they were in the first instance “men of capital and property;” “persons of family and opulence.” This is passing strange!—they entered the service men of property—they have since had unequalled opportunities of improving that property, and yet they are destitute beggars! If this be their situation, how is it to be accounted for? Have they madly dissipated the wealth which flowed in upon them so abundantly, or is it the fact that their emoluments have been overrated, and that the Company are actually offering them a compensation upon a scale of profits far too high? These are questions which their advocate must have anticipated, and which he ought to have answered.

But poverty is not the only evil which affects the members of the Maritime Service. They are “persecuted,” “immolated,” “struck down,” “crushed to the earth like worms,” and it is the Court of Directors who persecute, who immolate, who strike, who crush them. To escape from poverty and persecution, various methods have suggested themselves to the author of the Appeal, but none of them perfectly satisfactory. Sometimes he thinks it would be a good



way for them to rush *en masse* into the sea, “and engulf themselves in its broad waters.” At another, having gravely asked, “to what would the Court drive these persecuted men,” he inclines to their adopting the profession of pirates, and he actually claims great merit for them in not having become pirates during the continuance of the Company’s trade. Probably neither of these plans will be approved by the service. With regard to the first they will say with Iago, “drown cats and blind puppies,” and they will have still stronger objections to the second; yet these suggestions are quite as practical, and quite as reasonable, as many others in the pamphlet which contains them. But the service will not be compelled to adopt either of these resources. The Court have provided the means of relief for those commanders and officers who are really suffering poverty, and in the manner too which the Appellant thinks the only proper one—namely, by pension. It is time the officers should bring their quarrel with the Court to a close; but if they must continue it, let them at least find an advocate who will substitute argument for abuse.

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