

W. Russell

S U B S T A N C E

OF THE

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OF THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES JAMES FOX.

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O N M O N D A Y, D E C E M B E R 1, 1783,
U P O N
A M O T I O N
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C O M M I T M E N T
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B I L L

“ FOR VESTING THE AFFAIRS OF THE EAST-INDIA
COMPANY IN THE HANDS OF CERTAIN COMMISSIONERS,
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PROPRIETORS, AND OF
THE PUBLIC.”

L O N D O N :

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA
OF THE
SENATE

CHARLES JAMES

A. M. O. T.

1881

THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

LONDON
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S I R,

THE necessity of my saying something upon the present occasion, is so obvious to the House, that no apology will, I hope, be expected from me in troubling them even at so late an hour, (two o'clock in the morning.) I shall not enter much into a detail, or minute defence of the particulars of the bill before you, because few particular objections have been made. The opposition to it consisting only in general reasonings, of little

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application some — and some totally distant from the point in question.

This bill has been combated through its past stages upon various principles; but to this moment the House has not heard it canvassed upon its own intrinsic merits. The debate this night has turned chiefly upon two points — *violation of charter*, and *increase of influence*; and upon both these points I shall say a few words.

The honourable Gentleman, who opened the debate, (Mr. Powys) first demands my attention, not indeed for the wisdom of the observations which fell from him this night, (acute and judicious though he is upon most occasions) but from the natural weight of all such characters in this country, the aggregate of whom should, in my opinion, always decide upon public measures: but his ingenuity was never, in my opinion, exerted more ineffectually, upon more mistaken principles, and more inconsistent with the common tenour of his conduct, than in this debate.

The honourable Gentleman charges me with abandoning that cause, which, he says, in terms of flattery I had once so successfully asserted. I tell him, in reply, that if he were to search the history of my life, he would find that the period of it, in which I struggled most for the real substantial cause of liberty, is this very moment that I am addressing you. Freedom, according to my conception of it, consists in the safe and sacred possession of a man's property, governed by laws defined and certain; with many personal privileges, natural, civil, and religious, which he cannot surrender without ruin to himself; and of which to be deprived by any other power, is despotism. This bill, instead of subverting, is destined to stabilitate these principles; instead of narrowing the basis of freedom, it tends to enlarge it; instead of suppressing, its object is to infuse and circulate the spirit of liberty.

What is the most odious species of tyranny? Precisely that which this bill is meant to annihilate. That a handful of men, free themselves, should execute the most base and abominable

despotism over millions of their fellow creatures; that innocence should be the victim of oppression; that industry should toil for rapine; that the harmless labourer should sweat, not for his own benefit, but for the luxury and rapacity of tyrannic depredation. In a word, that thirty millions of men, gifted by Providence with the ordinary endowments of humanity, should groan under a system of despotism unmatched in all the histories of the world.

What is the end of all government? Certainly the happiness of the governed — Others may hold other opinions; but this is mine, and I proclaim it. What are we to think of a government, whose good fortune is supposed to spring from the calamities of its subjects, whose aggrandisement grows out of the miseries of mankind? This is the kind of government exercised under the East-India Company upon the natives of Indostan, and the subversion of that infamous government is the main object of the bill in question.

But

But in the progress of accomplishing this end, it is objected that the charter of the Company should not be violated; and upon this point, Sir, I shall deliver my opinion without disguise. A charter is a trust to one or more persons for some given benefit. If this trust be abused, if the benefit be not obtained, and that its failure arises from palpable guilt, or (what in this case is full as bad) from palpable ignorance or mismanagement, will any man gravely say, that trust should not be resumed, and delivered to other hands, more especially in the case of the East-India Company, whose manner of executing this trust, whose laxity and languor produced, and tend to produce, consequences diametrically opposite to the ends of confiding that trust, and of the institution for which it was granted?—I beg of gentlemen to be aware of the lengths to which their arguments upon the intangibility of this charter may be carried. Every syllable virtually impeaches the establishment by which we sit in this House, in the enjoyment of this freedom, and of every other blessing of our government. These kind of arguments are batteries against the main pillar

pillar of the British constitution. Some men are consistent with their own private opinions, and discover the inheritance of family maxims, when they question the principles of the Revolution; but I have no scruple in subscribing to the articles of that creed which produced it. Sovereigns are sacred, and reverence is due to every King:—yet with all my attachments to the person of a first magistrate, had I lived in the reign of James the Second, I should most certainly have contributed my little aids, and borne part in those illustrious struggles which vindicated an empire from hereditary servitude, and recorded this valuable doctrine, *that trust abused was revocable.*

No man will tell me, that a trust to a company of merchants, stands upon the solemn and sanctified ground by which a trust is committed to a Monarch; and I am at a loss to reconcile the conduct of men who approve that resumption of violated trust, which rescued and re-established our unparalleled and admirable constitution with a thousand valuable improvements and advantages at the Revolution, and who at this moment rise up
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the champions of the East India Company's charter, although the incapacity and incompetence of that company to a due and adequate discharge of the trust deposited in them by that charter, are themes of ridicule and contempt to all the world; and although in consequence of their mismanagement, connivance, and imbecility, combined with the wickedness of their servants, the very name of an Englishman is detested, even to a proverb, through all Asia; and the national character is become degraded and dishonoured. To rescue that name from odium, and redeem this character from disgrace, are some of the objects of the present bill; and gentlemen should indeed gravely weigh their opposition to a measure which, with a thousand other points not less valuable, aims at the attainment of these objects.

Having said so much upon the general matter of the bill, I must beg leave to make a few observations upon the remarks of particular gentlemen. And first of the learned gentleman over against me (Mr. Dundas). The learned gentleman has made a long, and, as he always does, an able
speech;

speech; yet, translated into plain English, and disrobed of the dextrous ambiguity in which it has been enveloped, what does it amount to?—To an establishment of the principles upon which this bill is founded, and, an indirect confession of its necessity. He allows the frangibility of charters when absolute occasion requires it, and admits that the charter of the Company should not prevent the adoption of a proper plan for the future government of India, if a proper plan can be achieved upon no other terms. The first of these admissions seems agreeable to the civil maxims of the learned gentleman's life, so far as a maxim can be traced in a political character, so various and flexible — And to deny the second of these concessions was impossible, even for the learned gentleman, with a staring reason* upon your table to confront him if he attempted it. The learned gentleman's bill, and the bill before you, are grounded upon the same bottom, of abuse of trust, mal-administration, debility and incapacity in the Company and their servants; but

* Mr. Dundas's Bill, brought in last year.

the difference in the remedy is this—the learned gentleman's bill opens a door to an influence a hundred times more dangerous than any that can be imputed to this bill, and deposits in one man an arbitrary power over millions; not in England, where the evil of his corrupt ministry could not be felt, but in the East Indies, the scene of every mischief, fraud, and violence. The learned gentleman's bill afforded the most extensive latitude for malversation — the bill before you guards against it with all imaginable precaution. Every line in both the bills which I have had the honour to introduce, presumes the possibility of bad administration, for every word breathes suspicion. This bill supposes that men are but men; it confides in no integrity, it trusts no character; it inculcates the wisdom of a jealousy of power, and annexes responsibility not only to every *action*, but even to the *inaction* of those who are to dispense it. The necessity of these provisions must be evident, when it is known that the different misfortunes of the Company resulted not more from what the servants *did*, than from what the masters did *not*.

To the probable effects of the learned gentleman's bill and this, I beg to call the attention of the House. Allowing, for argument's sake, to the Governor General of India, under the first-named bill, the most unlimited and superior abilities, with soundness of heart and integrity the most unquestionable; what good consequences could be reasonably expected from his extraordinary, extravagant, and unconstitutional power, under the tenure by which he held it? Were his projects the most enlarged, his systems the most wise and excellent which human skill could devise; what fair hope could be entertained of their eventual success, when perhaps before he could enter upon the execution of any measure, he may be recalled in consequence of one of those changes in the administrations of this country, which have been so frequent for a few years, and which some good men wish to see every year? Exactly the same reasons which banish all rational hope of benefit from an Indian administration under the bill of the learned gentleman, justify the duration of the proposed commission. If the dispensers of the plan of governing India, (a place from which the answer

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of a letter cannot be expected in less than twelve months) have not greater stability in their situations, than a British ministry — adieu to all hopes of rendering our Eastern territories of any real advantage to this country, adieu to every expectation of purging or purifying the Indian system, of reform, of improvement, of reviving confidence, of regulating the trade upon its proper principles, of restoring tranquillity, of re-establishing the natives in comfort, and of securing the perpetuity of these blessings, by the cordial reconcilment of the Indians with their former tyrants upon fixed terms of amity, friendship, and fellowship. I will leave the House and the kingdom to judge which is best calculated to accomplish those salutary ends; the bill of the learned gentleman, which leaves all to the *discretion* of one man, or the bill before you which depends upon the *duty* of several men, who are in a state of daily account to this House, of hourly account to the Ministers of the Crown, of occasional account to the proprietors of East India Stock, and who are allowed sufficient time

to practise their plans, unaffected by every political fluctuation.

But the learned gentleman wishes the appointment of an Indian Secretary of State in preference to these Commissioners; his partiality for such an institution I cannot guess; but that scheme strikes me as liable to a thousand times more objections than the plan in agitation.

Nay, the learned gentleman had rather, it seems, the affairs of India were blended with the business of the office which I have the honour to hold. His good disposition towards me upon all occasions cannot be doubted, and his sincerity in this opinion is unquestionable. I beg the House to attend to the reason which the learned gentleman gives for this preference, and to see the plights to which men, even of his understanding are reduced, who *must* oppose. He laughs at the responsibility of the Commissioners to this House, who in his judgment will find means of soothing, and softening, and meliorating the Members, into an oblivion of their mal-administration. What opinion has the
learned

learned gentleman of a Secretary of State? Does he think *him* so inert, so inactive, so incapable a creature, that with all this vaunted patronage of the seven in his own hands, the same means of soothing, and softening, and meliorating are thrown away upon him. — The learned gentleman has been for some years conversant with Ministers, but his experience has taught him, it seems, to consider Secretaries not only as untainted and immaculate, but innocent, harmless, and incapable. In his time Secretaries were all purity — with every power of corruption in their hands, but so inflexibly attached to rigid rectitude, that no temptation could seduce them to use that power for the purpose of corrupting, or, to use his own words, for soothing, or softening, or meliorating. The learned gentleman has formed his opinion of the simplicity and inaction of Secretaries, from that golden age of political probity, when his own friends were in power, and when himself was every thing but a minister. This erroneous humanity of opinion arises in the learned gentleman's unsuspecting, un sullied nature, as well as in a commerce with only the best and purest ministers

ministers of this country, which has given him so favourable an impression of a Secretary of State, that he thinks this patronage, so dangerous in the hands of seven Commissioners, perfectly safe in *his* hands. I leave to the learned gentleman that pleasure which his mind must feel under the conviction with which he certainly gives this opinion; but I submit to every man who hears me, what would be the probable comments of the other side of the House, had I proposed either the erection of an Indian Secretary, or the annexation of the India business to the office which I hold.

In the assemblage of the learned gentleman's objections, there is one still more curious than those I have mentioned. He dislikes this bill because it establishes an *imperium in imperio*. In the course of opposition to this measure, we have been familiarized to hear certain sentiments and particular words in this House — but directed, in reality, to *other* places. Taking it therefore for granted, that the learned gentleman has not so despicable an idea of the good sense of the members, as to expect any more attention within these

walls

walls to such a dogma, than has been shewn to the favourite phrase of his honourable friend near him, (Mr. W. Pitt) who calls a bill which backs this sinking company, with the credit of the state, a *confiscation of their property*. I would wish to ask the learned gentleman, if he really holds the understanding, even of the multitude, in such contempt as to imagine this species of argument can have the very slightest effect? The multitude know the fallacy of it as well as the learned gentleman himself. They know that a dissolution of the East-India Company has been wished for scores of years, by many good people in this country, for the *very reason* that it was an *imperium in imperio*. Yet the learned gentleman, with infinite gravity of face, tells you he dislikes this bill because it establishes this novel and odious principle. Even a glance of this bill, compared with the present constitution of the Company, manifests the futility of this objection, and proves that the company is, in its present form, a thousand times more an *imperium in imperio* than the proposed Commissioners. The worst species of government is that which can run counter to all the ends of its institution with impunity.

impunity. Such exactly was the East-India Company. No man can say, that the directors and proprietors have not, in a thousand instances, merited severe infliction; yet who did ever think of a legal punishment for either body? Now the great feature of this bill is to render the Commissioners amenable, and to punish them upon delinquency.

The learned gentleman prides himself that his bill did not meddle with the commerce of the Company; and another gentleman, after acknowledging the folly of leaving the government in the hands of the Company, proposes to separate the commerce entirely from the dominion, and leave the former safe and untouched to the Company itself. — I beg leave to appeal to every gentleman conversant in the Company's affairs, whether this measure is, in the nature of things, practicable at this moment. That the separation of the commerce from the government of the East may be ultimately brought about I doubt not; but when gentlemen reflect upon the immediate state of the Company's affairs, when they reflect that their government was carried on for the sake of their
commerce,

commerce, that both have been blended together for such a series of years; when they review the peculiar, perplexed, and involved state of the eastern territories, their dissimilitude to every system in this part of the globe, and consider the deep and laborious deliberation with which every step for the establishment of a salutary plan of government, in the room of the present odious one, must be taken — the utter impossibility of instantly detaching the governing power from interference with the commercial body, will be clear and indubitable.

A gentleman has asked, why not choose the Commissioners out of the body of Directors; and why not leave the choice of the assistant Directors in the Court of Proprietors? That is to say, why not do that which would infallibly undoe all you are aiming at? — I mean no general disparagement when I say that the body of the Directors have given memorable proofs that they are not the sort of people, to whom any man can look for the success or salvation of India. Amongst them there are without doubt, some individuals respectable

both for their knowledge and integrity; but I put it to the candour of gentlemen, whether they are the species of men whose wisdom, energy, and diligence, would give any promise of emancipating the East-India concerns from their present disasters and disgraces. Indeed both questions may be answered in two words. Why not choose the Directors — *who have ruined the Company?* Why not leave the power of election in the Proprietors — *who have thwarted every good attempted by the Directors?*

The last point adverted to by the learned gentleman relates to *influence*, and upon his remarks, combined with what fell from some others upon the same subject, I beg leave to make a few observations. Much of my life has been employed to diminish the inordinate influence of the Crown. In common, with others, I succeeded, and I glory in it. To support that kind of influence which I formerly subverted, is a deed of which I shall never deserve to be accused. The affirmation with which I first introduced this plan, I now repeat — I re-affert that this bill as little augments the influence

fluence of the crown, as any measure which can be devised for the government of India, that presents the slightest promise of solid success, and that it tends to encrease it in a far less degree than the bill proposed by the learned gentleman. The very genius of influence consists in hope or fear; —fear of losing what we have, or hope of gaining more. Make these Commissioners removeable at will, and you set all the little passions of human nature afloat. If benefit can be derived from the bill, you had better burn it, than make the duration short of the time necessary to accomplish the plans it is destined for. *That* consideration pointed out the expediency of a fixed period; and in that respect it accords with the principle of the learned gentleman's bill; with this superior advantage, that instead of leaving the Commissioners liable to all the influence which springs from the appointment of a Governor General, removeable at *pleasure*, this bill invests them with the power for *the time specified* upon the same tenure that British Judges hold their station — removeable upon delinquency, punishable upon guilt — but fearless of power if they

discharge their trust, liable to no seducement, and with full time and authority to execute their functions, for the common good of the country, and for their own glory. I beg of the House to attend to this difference, and then judge upon the point of encreasing the influence of the Crown, contrasted with the learned gentleman's bill.

The state of accusations against me upon this subject of *influence*, is truly curious. — The learned gentleman, (Mr. Dundas) in strains of emphasis, declares that this bill diminishes the influence of the crown beyond all former attempts, and calls upon those who formerly voted with him in support of that influence, against our efforts to reduce it, and who now sit near me, to join him now in opposing my attempts to diminish their darling influence. He tells them I out *Herod Herod*, that I am out doing all my former out doings, and proclaims me as the merciless and insatiate enemy of the influence of the Crown.

Down

Down sits the learned gentleman, and up starts an honourable gentleman, with a charge against me, upon the same subject, of a nature the direct reverse. I have fought under your banner, cries the honourable gentleman (Mr. Martin) against that fell giant, the influence of the Crown; I have bled in that battle which you commanded, and have a claim upon the rights of soldiership. You have conquered through us; and now that victory is in your arms, you turn traitor to our cause, and carry over your powers to the enemy. The fiercest of your former combatants in the cause of influence, falls far short of you at this moment; your attempts in re-erecting this monster, exceed all the exertions of your former foes. This night you will make the influence of the Crown a colossus, that shall bestride the land, and crush every impediment. I impeach you for treachery to your ancient principles — come, come, and divide with us!

This honourable gentleman, after a peg or two at the Coalition, declines into silence; and whilst the House is perplexing itself to reconcile these
wide

wide differences, the right honourable gentleman over the way (Mr. W. Pitt) confounds all past contradictions, by combining, in his own person, these extravagant extremes. He acknowledges that he has digested a paradox; and a paradox well he might call it, for never did a grosser one puzzle the intellects of a public assembly. By a miraculous kind of discernment he has found out, that the bill both *increases* and *diminishes* the influence of the Crown.

The bill diminishes the influence of the Crown, says one—you are wrong, says a second, it increases it. You are both right, says a third, for it both increases and diminishes the influence of the Crown.—Now as most Members have one or other of these opinions upon the subject, the honourable gentleman can safely join with all parties upon this point, but few I trust will be found to join him.

Thus, Sir, is this bill combated, and thus am I accused. The nature and substance of these objections I construe as the strongest comment upon
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the excellence of the bill. If a more rational opposition *could* be made to it, no doubt it would. The truth is, it increases the influence of the Crown, and the influence of party as little as possible; and if the reform of India, or any other matter, is to be postponed until a scheme be devised, against which ingenuity, or ignorance, or caprice shall not raise objections, the affairs of human life must stand still.

I beg the House will attend a little to the manner in which the progress of this bill has been retarded, especially by the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Pitt.) First, the Members were not all in town, and time was desired upon that account. Next, the finances of the East-India Company were misstated by me, and time was desired to prove that. The time came, the proofs exhibited, counsel heard, and yet the issue was, that my former statement, instead of being controverted, became more established by the very proofs which were brought to overturn it. The honourable gentleman has misrepresented me to-night again—he has an evident pleasure in it, which indeed

indeed I cannot prevent; but I can prevent this House and this country from believing him. He prefers the authority of his own conception (eager enough in all conscience to misunderstand me) of what I said to my own repeated declarations of my own meaning. He supposes a mistake because he wishes it. — I never did say the Company were absolute bankrupts to the amount of the debt, but I said there was immediate necessity of paying that given sum, without any immediate means of providing for it. The account of the Company's circumstances presented last week, furnished matter of triumph to the honourable gentleman for the full space of *three hours*, that is to say, whilst council were at the bar. I made no objection to the account but this *trifling* one — that 12,000,000 were stated which ought not to appear at all there, and which were placed there only for delusion and fallacy. I never objected to the arithmetic of the account. The sums I doubt not were accurately cast up even to a figure—Yet the House will recollect that the honourable gentleman about this very hour of that debate, endeavoured to protract the business to the next day, upon assu-

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ring the House that the Company would then support their statement. I refused to accede because I knew the matter to be mere shifiting, and manœuvering for a vote, and that the Company *could not* support their statement. Was I right? the House sees whether I was—The house sees the finance post is now totally abandoned, and for the best reason in the world, because it is no longer tenable. But the honourable gentleman is indeed a man of resources, he now gives me a challenge, and I beg the House to remark that I accept his challenge, and that I prophecy he will no more meet me upon this than upon the former points.

But there is no limit to a youthful and vigorous fancy—The right honourable Gentleman just now, in very serious terms, and with all his habitual gravity, engages, if the House will join in opposing us to-night, that he will digest and methodise a plan, the outline of which he has already conceived. He has nothing *now* to offer; but justly confiding in the fertility of his own imagination, and the future exercise of his faculties, he promises that he *will* bring a plan — *provi-*

ded the majority of this House will join him to-night. Now, if ever an idea was thrown out to pick up a stray vote or two in the heel of a debate by a device, the idea given a while ago by the honourable Gentleman is precisely such: but if I can augur rightly from the complection of the House, his present will have exactly the same success with all his past stratagems to oppose this bill*.

His learned friend, (Mr. Dundas) with singular placidness, without smile or sneer, has said, “as this measure was probably decided upon some time since, the East-India Company, *who could not expect such a blow*, ought to have been informed of the intended project. The Company was evidently unaware of this attack, and in fairness should have been apprised of it.” Does the learned Gentleman imagine men are in their sober senses, who listen to such cavilling and quibbling opposition? The Company unaware of this attack! The learned Gentleman’s

* He was right; for the Ministry had an accession of five votes this night, above the former division.

own labours, independent of any other intimation, had been an ample warning to the Company to be prepared. Every man in the kingdom who reads a newspaper expected something; and the only wonder with the nation was, how it could be so long delayed. The reports of the Committees alarmed the public so much, for the honour of the country, and for the salvation of the Company, that all eyes were upon East-India affairs. This sort of observation had indeed much better come from any other man in this House, than from that identical gentleman.

If these were not sufficient to rouse the attention and diligence of the Company, his Majesty's speech at the commencement and conclusion of the late session of Parliament, gave them note of preparation in the most plain and decisive terms: In his opening speech his Majesty thus speaks to Parliament upon the subject of India:

“ The regulation of a vast territory in Asia,
 “ opens a large field for your wisdom, prudence,
 “ and foresight: I trust that you will be able to

“ form some fundamental laws which m̄ make
 “ their connection with Great Britain a blessing
 “ to India ; and that you will take therein pro-
 “ per measures to give all foreign nations, in
 “ matters of foreign commerce, an entire and
 “ perfect confidence in the probity, punctuallity,
 “ and good order of our government. You may
 “ be assured that whatever depends upon Me,
 “ shall be executed with a steadiness, which can
 “ alone preserve that part of My dominions, or
 “ the commerce which arises from it.”

The learned gentleman, who knows more of
 the dispositions of the cabinet at that time than I
 do, can better tell whether any measure of this
 nature was then intended. The words are very
 wide, and seem to portend at least something very
 important ; but whether any thing similar to this
 measure was meant, as this passage seems to imply,
 or not, is indifferent to the point in question.
 This is clear from it, that it gives a very cere-
 monious warning to [the East-India Company ;
 enough surely to expose the weakness and futility of
 the learned gentleman's remark. The changes and
 circum-

circumstances of the Cabinet, in the course of the last session, can be the only excuse for the delay of some decisive measure with regard to India; and if in addition to all these, any thing more is requisite to confirm the notoriety of Parliament's being to enter upon the business, the following paragraph of the King's closing speech, last July, completes the mass of evidence against the learned gentleman,

His Majesty after intimating a belief that he shall be obliged to call his Parliament together earlier than usual, thus speaks:

“ The consideration of the affairs of the East Indies will require to be resumed as early as possible, and to be pursued with a serious and unremitting attention.”—Superadd to all this, the part of the King's opening speech this year upon India, and if the whole do not constitute sufficient testimony that the Company had full notice — nothing can.

Yet

Yet notwithstanding all this, the learned gentleman accuses us of *surprising* the Company, and his right honourable friend, in hopes his proposal of another bill may have weight in the division — repeats the hacknied charge of *precipitation*, and forces the argument for delay in a taunt, “ that
 “ we wish to get rid of our torments, by send-
 “ ing this bill to the other House.” The honourable gentleman’s talents are splendid and various; but I assure him that all his efforts, for the last eight days, have not given me a single torment: were I to choose a species of opposition to insure a ministerial tranquillity, it would be the kind of opposition which this bill has received, in which every thing brought to confute, has tended to confirm, and in which the arguments adduced to expose the weakness, have furnished materials to establish the wisdom of the measure — so impossible is it, without something of a tolerable cause, even for the right honourable gentleman’s abilities to have effect, though his genius may make a flourishing and superior figure in the attempt.

Before I proceed to the other parts of the debate, I wish to say one word upon a remark of the learned gentleman: He says, that the clause relative to the Zemindars was suggested by his observations. God forbid I should detract from the merit, or diminish the desert of any man. Undoubtedly that excellent part of the regulation bill derives from the learned gentleman; and if he were in this House when I introduced the subject of India, he would have known that I did him full and compleat justice upon that point.

My noble friend (Lord John Cavendish) has said, this bill does not arise from the poverty of the Company, but that liberal policy and national honour demanded it. ——— Upon the last day this bill was debated, I confined myself chiefly to the demonstration of the fallacy and imposture of that notable schedule presented by the East-India Company, and having

proved

proved its falshood, I can now with the greater safety declare, that if every shilling of that fictitious property was real and forth coming, a bill of this nature was not therefore the less necessary. I thought we were fully understood upon this point from the opening speech in this business, which did not so degrade the measure as to say it originated in the poverty of the Company, which, as my noble friend rightly remarks, was the smallest reason to its adoption, and which opinion is not, as the right honourable gentleman insinuates, "Shifting," but recognizing and recording the true grounds of the bill. If any misunderstanding then has hitherto taken place upon this head, it will, I trust, cease henceforth, and so odious a libel upon this country will not pass current as that sordid motives only induced the government of England to *that* which we were bound to do, as politicians, as Christians, and as men: by every consideration which makes a nation respectable, great, and glorious!

Having

Having vindicated the bill from this aspersions; and founded it upon that basis which every honest and sensible man in England must approve, I may be allowed to say that some regard may be had even to the mean and mercenary upon this subject (a portion of whom we have here, in common with all other countries.) Will such men endure with temper a constant drain upon this kingdom, for the sake of this monopolizing corporation? Will those, for instance, who clamour against a two-penny tax, afford with good humour million after million to the East-India Company. The sinking fund is at this moment a million the worse for the deficiencies of the Company, and as the Noble Lord (Lord John) says, an extent must in three weeks arrest their property, if Parliament does not interpose or enable them to discharge a part of their debt to the Crown. Let those, therefore, who think the commerce ought to be instantly separated from the dominion, (were that at this time possible) and who think it ought to be left wholly in the present hands, reflect — that the formation of a vigorous system of government for India is not more incumbent upon

us, than the establishment of the Eastern trade upon such principles of solidity and fitness, as shall give some just hopes that the public may be speedily relieved from the monstrous pressure of constantly supporting the indigence of the Company.

I have spoke of myself very often in the course of what I have said this night, and must speak still more frequently in the course of what I have to say; The House will see this aukward task is rendered indispenfible, infinitely more having been said concerning *me*, during the debate, than concerning the question, which is the proper subject of agitation. The right honourable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) says, that nothing ever happened to give him an ill impresson of my character, or to prevent a mutual confidence. He says rightly. There have been interchanges of civility, and amicable habits between us, in which I trust I have given him no cause to complain. But after pronouncing a brilliant eulogy upon me and my capacity

capacity to serve the country, the honourable gentleman considers me at the same time the most dangerous man in the kingdom, (Mr. Pitt said across the House, “*dangerous only from this measure.*” To which Mr. Fox instantly made this reply) I call upon the House to attend to the honourable gentleman; he thinks me dangerous *only from this measure*, and confesses that *hitherto* he has seen nothing in my conduct to obliterate his good opinion. Compare this with his opposition during the last and the present session. Let every man reflect, that up to this moment the honourable gentleman deemed me worthy of confidence, and competent to my situation in the state. I thank him for the *support* he has afforded to the Minister he thus esteemed, and shall not press the advantage he gives me, farther than leaving to himself to reconcile his practice and his doctrine in the best manner he can.

The honourable gentleman could not for one night pass by the *Coalition*, yet I think he might have chosen a fitter time to express his indignation against the noble Lord (Lord North) than the present

moment. An attack upon the noble Lord in his presence would bear a more liberal colour; and the cause of his absence now*, would surely rather disarm than irritate a generous enemy. There are distinctions in hatred, and the direst foes upon such occasions moderate their aversion. The Coalition is, however, a fruitful topic, and the power of traducing it, which the weakest and meanest creatures in the country enjoy and exercise, is of course equally vested in men of rank and parts, though every man of parts and rank would not be apt to participate the privilege. Upon the Coalition the honourable gentleman is welcome to employ his ingenuity, but upon another subject alluded to by him, I shall beg leave to advise, nay even to instruct him.

In what system of ethics will the honourable gentleman find the precept taught of ripping up old sores, and reviving animosities among individuals, of which the parties themselves retain no

* Lord North left the House very sick about midnight.

memory *? This kind of practice may incur a much worse charge than weakness of understanding, and subject a man to much greater imputations than are commonly applied to political mistakes or party violence. The soundness of the heart may be liable to suspicion, and the moral character be in danger of suffering by it, in the opinion of mankind. To cover the heats, and obliterate the sense of former quarrels between two persons, is a very distinguished virtue:— to renew the subject of *such* differences, and attempt the revival of *such* disputes, deserves a name which I could give it, if that honourable gentleman had not forgotten himself, and fallen into some such deviation. He values himself, I doubt not, too much, again to make a similar slip, and must even feel thankful to me for the counsel I thus take the liberty to give him.

An honourable gentleman under the gallery, (Mr. Martin) to whom an abuse of the Coalition seems a sort of luxury, wishes that a starling were

* Mr. Pitt quoted the passage of that famous speech of Mr. Fox's, which produced the duel between him and Mr. Adam.

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at the right hand of the chair to cry out disgraceful Coalition! — Sir, upon this subject I shall say but a few words: —

The calamitous situation of this country required an administration whose stability could give it a tone of firmness with foreign nations, and promise some hope of restoring the faded glories of the country. Such an administration could not be formed without *some* junction of parties; and if former differences were to be an insurmountable barrier to union, no chance of salvation remained for the country, as it is well known, that four public men could not be found, who had not, at one time or other, taken opposite sides in politics. The great cause of difference between us and the noble Lord in the blue ribbon no longer existed; his personal character stood high, and thinking it safer to trust him than those who had before deceived us, we preferred to unite with the noble Lord. A similar junction, in 1757, against which a similar clamour was raised, saved the empire from ruin, and raised it above the rivalry of all its enemies. The country, when we came into office, bore not a
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very auspicious complexion; yet, Sir, I do not despair of seeing it once again resume its consequence in the scale of nations, and make as splendid a figure as ever. Those who have asserted the impossibility of our agreeing with the noble Lord and his friends, were false prophets; for events have belied their augury. We have differed like men, and like men we have agreed.

A body of the best and honestest men in this House, who serve their country without any other reward than the glory of a disinterested discharge of their public duty, approved that junction, and sanctify the measure by their cordial support.

Such, Sir, is this Coalition, which the state of the country rendered indispensable; and for which the history of every country records a thousand precedents, yet to this the term disgraceful is applied. — Is it not extraordinary, then, that gentlemen should be under such spells of self-delusion, as not to see, that if calling it disgraceful, makes it so, these epithets operate with equal force against themselves. If the *Coalition* be disgraceful, what

what is the *anti-Coalition*? When I see the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) surrounded by the early objects of his political, nay his hereditary* hatred, and hear him revile the Coalition, I am lost in the astonishment how men can be so blind to their own situation, as to attempt to wound us in this particular point, possessed as we are of the power of returning the same blow, with the vulnerable part staring us directly in the face. If the honourable gentleman under the gallery wishes that a starling were perched upon the right hand of the Chair—I tell him, that the wish is just as reasonable, to have another starling upon the left hand of the Chair, to chirp up *Coalition* against *Coalition*, and so to harmonize their mutual disgrace, if disgrace there be.

With the same consistency, an honourable gentleman calls us *deserters* ——— us; a few cold and disaffected members fall off, then turn about; and, to palliate their own defection, call the body of the army *deserters*! *We* have not deserted; here

* Mr. Jenkinson sat near Mr. Pitt, Mr. Dundas, &c.

we are a firm phalanx. Deserted indeed we have been in the moment of disaster, but never dejected, and seldom complaining. Some of those who rose upon our wreck, and who eagerly grasped that power which we had the labour of erecting, now call us deserters.—We retort the term with just indignation. Yet whilst they presume we have the attributes of men, they would expect us to have the obduracy of savages. They would have our resentments insatiate, our rancour eternal. In our opinion, an oblivion of useless animosity is much more noble; and in that, the conduct of our accusers goes hand in hand with us.—But I beg of the House, and I wish the world to observe, that although, like them, we have abandoned our enmities, we have not, like them, relinquished our friendships.

An honourable gentleman advises me for the future, not to mention the name of the Marquis of Rockingham, who, he says, would never countenance a bill of this kind. This is indeed imposing hard conditions upon those who have willingly suffered a sort of political martyrdom in

the cause of that noble Lord's principles, those who surrendered pomp and power, rather than remain where his principles ceased to be fashionable, and were withering into contempt.—I venerate the name of that noble Marquis, and shall ever mention it with love and reverence; but at no period of my life with more confidence than at this moment, when I say, that his soul speaks in every line of the bill before you, for his soul speaks in every measure of virtue, wisdom, humane policy, general justice, and national honour. The name of the noble Lord who enjoys his fortune, has been mentioned in this debate, and will be mentioned again by me; I will tell the honourable gentleman, that this noble Lord, * though not the issue of his loins, inherits, with his property, the principles of that noble Marquis in all their purity and soundness; and is as incapable as that noble Marquis himself, or as any man on earth, of countenancing any act which either immediately or ultimately tended to the prejudice of his country, or the injury of the constitution.

* Lord Fitzwilliam.

An honourable gentleman (Mr. T. Pitt) at the other side, has used violent terms against this bill, and the movers of it. Sir, I tell that honourable gentleman (looking directly in the face of Mr. T. Pitt) that the movers of this bill are not to be brow-beaten by studied gestures, nor frightened by tremulous tones, solemn phrases, or hard epithets. To arguments they are ready to reply; but all the notice they can take of assertions, is to mark to the House, that they are *only* assertions. The honourable gentleman again repeats his favourite language of our having *seized upon the government*;—his Majesty changed his Ministry last April, in consequence of a vote of this House;—his Majesty did the same twelve months before, in consequence of a vote of this House.—His Majesty in so doing followed the example of his predecessors; and his successors will, I doubt not, follow the example of his Majesty.—The votes of Parliament have always decided upon the duration of Ministry, and always will, I trust. It is the nature of our constitution; and those who dislike it, had better attempt to alter it. The honourable

gentleman called the change in 1782 a glorious one—this in 1783 a disgraceful one. Why? For a very obvious, though a very bad reason.—The honourable gentleman assisted in effecting the first, and strenuously laboured to prevent the second.—The first battle he fought with us; the second against us, and we vanquished him—— In 1782 his friends were *out*, and would be *in*—— In 1783 his friends were *in*, nor *would* go out. Thus having done without him what we once did with him, the House sees his motive—It is human nature certainly; but certainly not the better part of human nature,

A game of a two-fold quality is playing by the other side of the House upon this occasion, to which I hope the House, and I hope the kingdom, will attend. They are endeavouring to injure us through two channels at the same time — through a certain great quarter, and through the people. They are attempting to alarm the first, by asserting that this bill encreases the influence of Ministry *against* the Crown; and rousing the people, under an idea that it encreases the influence of the Crown *against*

against them.—That they will fail in both I doubt not—In the great quarter I trust they are well understood, and the princely mind of that high person is a security against their devices:—they are running swiftly to take off whatever little imposition might have been put upon any part, even of the multitude. And I wish to rescue the character of the public understanding from the contemptuous implication, that it is capable of being gulled by such artifices. I feel for my country's honour when I say, that Englishmen, free themselves and fond of giving freedom to others, disdain these stratagems, and are equally above the silliness of crediting the revilers of this act, as above the baseness of confederating or making common cause with those who would support a system which has dishonoured this country, and which keeps thirty millions of the human race in wretchedness. I make allowance for the hair-brained headstrong delusions of folly and ignorance, and the effects of design. To such evils every measure is liable, and every man must expect a portion of the consequence. But for the serious and grave deter-

determinations of the publick judgement I have the highest value, I ever had, and ever shall have. If it be a weakness, I confess it, that to lose the good opinion of even the meanest mans gives me some pain; and whatever triumph my enemies can derive from such a frame of mind, they are welcome to. I do not, after the example of the honourable gentleman who began this debate, (Mr. Powys) hold the opinion of constituents in disparagement. The clear and decided opinion of the more reasonable and respectable should, in my opinion weigh the Member upon the same principle that, I think, with the voice of the nation should prevail in this House, and in every other place. But when the representative yields to the constituent, it should indeed be by the majority of the reasonable and respectable, and not as we shall see in a day or two, some of the honestest men in England voting against the most popular tax ever introduced into this House, in direct opposition to their own conviction, and *not* upon the opinion of either the more respectable or reasonable class of their constituents.

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My noble friend (Lord John) with his characteristic spirit, has said, that *we* never sought power by cabal or intrigue, or under-hand operations; and this he said in reply to an honourable gentleman (Mr. T. Pitt) whose conduct demonstrates that he thinks *those* the surest path for his friends. This bill, as a ground of contention, is farcical: the bill, if it admitted it, would be combated upon its intrinsic qualities, and not by abusing the Coalition, or raising a clamour about influence; but why don't the gentlemen speak out fairly, as we do; and then let the world judge between us? Our love and loyalty to the Sovereign are as ardent and firm as their own. Yet the broad basis of public character upon which we received, is the principle by which we hope to retain this power, — convinced that the surest road to the favour of the Prince, is by serving him with zeal and fidelity; that the safest path to popularity, is by reducing the burden, and restoring the glory of the nation. Let those (looking at Mr. Jenkinson) who aim at office by *other* means, by inscrutable and mysterious methods, speak out; or if they will not, let the world know it is because their

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arts will not bear examination; and that their safety consists in their obscurity. Our principles are well known; and I should prefer to perish with them, rather than prosper with any other.

The honourable gentleman under the gallery (Mr. Martin) says, he dislikes systematic opposition—Whether perpetually rising up with peevish, capricious objections to every thing proposed by us, deserve that name or not, I leave the gentleman himself to determine, and leave the House to reflect upon that kind of conduct which condemns the theory of its own constant practice—but I meet the gentleman directly upon the principle of the term. He dislikes systematic opposition; now I like it.—A systematic opposition to a dangerous government is, in my opinion, a noble employment for the brightest faculties; and if the honourable gentleman thinks our administration a bad one, he is right to contribute to its downfall. Opposition is natural in such a political system as ours; it has subsisted in all such governments; and perhaps it is necessary. But to those who oppose it, it is extremely essential that their manner of conducting it incur not a suspicion of their motives. If they appear

appear to oppose from disappointment, from mortification, from pique, from whim, the people will be against them. If they oppose from public principle, from love of their country rather than hatred to administration, from evident conviction of the badness of measures, and a full persuasion that in their resistance to men, they are aiming at the public welfare, the people will be with them. We opposed upon *these* principles, and the people were with us; if we are opposed upon *other* principles, they will not be against us. Much labour has been employed to infuse a prejudice upon the present subject; and I have the satisfaction to believe, that this labour has been fruitless; (making a reasonable exception for the mistakes of the uninformed, the first impressions of novelty, and the natural result of deliberate malice) we desire to be tried by the test of this very bill, and risk our character upon the issue: confiding thoroughly in the good sense, the justice, and the spirit of Englishmen.— Not lofty sounds, nor selected epithets, nor passionate declamation in this House, nor all the fordid efforts of interested men out of this House, (of men whose acts in the East have branded the British name, and whose ill-gotten opulence, working through a thousand channels to delude and

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debauch the public understanding) can fasten odium upon this measure, or draw an obloquy upon the authors of it. We have been tried in the cause of the public; and until we desert that cause, we are assured of public confidence and protection.

The honourable gentleman insinuates that I was incited by avarice, or ambition, or party spirit.— I have failings in common with every human being, beside my own peculiar faults. But of avarice, I have indeed held myself guiltless. My abuse has been, for many years, even the profession of several people; it was their traffic, their livelihood; yet until this moment I knew not that avarice was in the catalogue of the sins imputed to me. Ambition I confess I have, but not ambition upon a narrow bottom, or built upon paltry principles. If, from the devotion of my life to political objects, if from the direction of my industry to the attainment of some knowledge of the Constitution, and the true interests of the British empire, the ambition of taking no mean part in those acts that elevate nations, and make a people happy, be criminal, that ambition I acknowledge. And as to party spirit — that I feel it, that I have been ever under its impulse, and that I ever shall, is what I proclaim

proclaim to the world. That I am one of a party, a party never known to sacrifice the interests, or barter the liberties of the nation for mercenary purposes, for personal emolument or honours, a party linked together upon principles which comprehend whatever is dear and most precious to free men, and essential to a free constitution, is my pride and my boast.

But, Sir, I have a peculiar glory that a body of men renowned for their ancestry, important for their possessions, distinguished for their personal worth, with all that is valuable to men at stake, hereditary fortunes and hereditary honours, deem me worthy of their confidence. With such men I am something—without them, nothing. My reliance is upon their good opinion; and in that respect perhaps I am fortunate. Although I have a just confidence in my own integrity, yet as I am but man, perhaps it is well that I have no choice but between my own eternal disgrace and a faithful discharge of my publick duty, whilst these kind of men are overseers of my conduct, whilst men whose uprightness of heart and spotless honour are even proverbial in the country

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(looking at Lord John Cavendish) are the vigils of my deeds, it is a pledge to the publick for the purity and rectitude of my conduct.—The prosperity and honour of the country are blended with the prosperity and honour of these illustrious persons. They have so much at stake, that if the country falls, they fall with it; and to countenance any thing against its interest would be a suicide upon themselves. The good opinion and protection of these men is a security to the nation for my behaviour, because if I lose them, I lose my all.

Having said so much upon the extraneous subjects introduced by the honourable gentleman into the debate, I shall proceed to make some observations upon the business in question. When the learned gentleman brought in his bill last year, the House saw its frightful features with just horror, but a very good method was adopted to soften the terrors of the extravagant power that bill vested in the Governor General. The name of a noble Lord* was sent forth at the same time, whose great character lent a grace to a proposition

* Lord Cornwallis.

which,

which, destitute of such an advantage, could not be listened to for one moment. Now, Sir, observe how differently we have acted upon the same occasion.

The Earl of Fitzwilliam has been spoken of here this day, in those terms of admiration with which his name is always mentioned. Take notice, however, that we did not avail ourselves of the fame of his virtue and abilities in passing this bill through the House.

If such a thing were to have taken place, as the institution of an Indian Secretaryship (according to the suggestions of some gentlemen) this noble Lord would certainly have been the very person whom, for my part, I should have advised his Majesty to invest with that office. Yet, although his erect mind and spotless honour would have held forth to the public the fullest confidence of a faithful execution of its duties; the objections in regard to influence upon a removeable officer, are tenfold in comparison with the present scheme. The House

must now see that, with all the benefits we might derive

rive from that noble Lord's character — that, altho' his name would have imparted a sanctity, an ornament, and an honour to the bill, we ushered it in without that ceremony, to stand or fall by its own intrinsic merits, neither shielding it under the reputation, nor gracing it under the mantle of any man's virtue. Our merit will be more in this, when the names of those are known whom we mean to propose to this House, to execute this commission. (name them, said Mr. Arden, across the House) I will not—I will not name them, the bill shall stand or fall by its own merits, without aid or injury from their character. An honourable gentleman has said these commissioners will be made up of our “adherents and creatures.” Sir, there is nothing more easy than to use disparaging terms ; yet I should have thought the name of the Earl of Fitzwilliam would have given a fair presumption that the colleagues we shall recommend to this House for the co-execution of this business, with that noble Lord, will not be of a description to merit these unhandsome epithets.—I assure the honourable gentleman they are not.—I assure him they are not men whose faculties of corrupting, or
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whose corruptibility, will give any alarm to this House, or to this country; they are men whose private and public characters stand high and untainted; who are not likely to countenance depredation, or participate the spoils of rapacity. They are not men to screen delinquency, or to pollute the service by disgraceful appointments. They would not, for instance, send Paul Benfield to India, nor shelter him in England, without his deserving it.

But this bill, Sir, presumes not upon the probity of the men;—it looks to the future possibility of dissimilar successors, and to the mortality of the present commissioners, who are merely human, and therefore not incapable of alteration. Under all the caution of this bill, with the responsibility it imposes, I will take upon me to say, that if the aggregate body of this board, determined to use all its power for the purpose of corruption, this House, and the people at large, would have less to dread from them in the way of influence, than from a few Asiatics who will probably be displaced in consequence of this arrangement,

ment, some of whom will return to this country with a million, some with seven hundred thousand, some with five, beside the three or four hundred thousand of others who are cut off in their career, by the hand of fate. An inundation of such wealth is far more dangerous than any influence that is likely to spring from a plan of government so constituted as this proposed—whether the operation of such a mass of wealth, be considered in its probable effects, upon the principles of the members of this House, or the manners of the people at large—more especially when a reflection that orientalists are in general the most exemplary class of people in their morals, and in their deportment the most moderate and corresponding with the distinction of their high birth and families, furnishes a very reasonable presumption, that the expenditure of their money will be much about as honourable as its acquirement.

I shall now, Sir, conclude my speech with a few words upon the opinion of the right honourable gentleman, (Mr. Pitt.) He says, “he will stake his character upon the danger of this bill”. I

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meet him in his own phrase, and oppose him—character to character—I risk my all upon the excellence of this bill, I risk upon it whatever is most dear to me, whatever men most value; the character of integrity, of talents, of honour, of present reputation and future fame; these, and whatever else is precious to me I stake upon the constitutional safety, the enlarged policy, the equity, and the wisdom of this measure, and have no fear in saying, (whatever may be the fate of its authors) that this bill will produce to this country every blessing of commerce and revenue; and that by extending a generous and humane government over those millions whom the inscrutable destinations of providence have placed under us in the remotest regions of the earth, it will consecrate the name of England amongst the noblest of nations.

[Mr. Fox then recapitulated the heads of his speech and sat down. He was upon his legs about an hour and a half.]

T H E E N D.