

THE
LIFE AND CORRESPONDENCE
OF
JAMES ST. GEORGE TUCKER,

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LATE ACCOUNTANT-GENERAL OF BENGAL,
AND
MEMBER OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.

BY
JOHN WILLIAM KAYE,
AUTHOR OF THE "HISTORY OF THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN."

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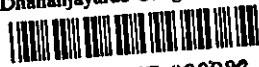
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PREFACE.

A WORK of this kind tells its own story so plainly, that little prefatory remark need be made in the shape of explanation or apology. I was requested to write the Life of HENRY ST. GEORGE TUCKER; and believing that a Memoir of one, who throughout the space of half a century took no unimportant part in many of the great transactions of Indian history, and who, in his participation in those transactions, "did all like a man," would contribute much both in the way of historical information and personal example to the general stock of "things worth knowing," I undertook to write it; and the present volume is the result of my endeavors.

I wish, however, to add, that for the publication of whatsoever the Memoir contains, I, and I alone, am responsible. It is based entirely on materials derived from private sources. I have not received the smallest assistance from any public body or any official person. If there be anything in this volume which ought not to be there, the indiscretion is mine. I believe, however, that the faults of the work are rather those of omission than commission. Certainly they are in my own eyes. If any one should think that I have inserted too much, and reproach me for the insertion, I would beg him to believe, that in consideration for what is called "public convenience"—a great inconvenience, be it

said, to the Public—and what really is private feeling, I have forborne even more than I have adventured.

What's done ye partly may compute—
But know not what's resisted.

It would have been egotistical and presumptuous in me to have said even this much, upon the circumstances under which the present work has been written, if it had not been that, on a recent occasion, these personal circumstances were much mis-stated both in Parliament and by the Press; and a great Public Body identified with what was in reality but a private undertaking. And, however willing I may be, in all cases where others have assisted me, to share with them the praise that may be considered my due, I wish to keep the blame undividedly to myself; and to be held solely responsible for all the revelations that are made, and all the opinions that are expressed, in any book that bears my name upon its title.

I have but one word more to say, personal to myself. On looking over the sheets of this work, it appears to me that there is, in some parts, what may seem to be a party bias—in other words, a disposition to speak more slightly of the acts of the old Whig party than those of their opponents. As the supposition that I have written at all under political influence would, very properly, invalidate my testimony, I think it right to say, that ever since I was a boy my sympathies have been all with the Whigs, and that if this has not appeared in the writings which bear my name, it is because I have ever held that “India is of no Party,” and esteemed the claims of Historical Truth paramount over *all* considerations of Party or of Person.

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ERRATA.

- Page 2, line 8, *dele* inverted commas after *post*.
Page 49, last line, for "devolve," read "*devolves*."
Page 377, line 5, for "point," read "*points*."

APPENDIX.

[A.—Page 292.]

EXTRACT PUBLIC LETTER FROM BENGAL.

Dated 20th October, 1812.

Par. 83. The grounds which led us to appoint a separate Secretary in the Colonial and Financial Departments, are stated in the minute of the Right Honorable the Governor-General, dated 8th of August.

84. The Governor-General remarks that the return of Mr. Tucker, from England, to this country, naturally suggested a strong desire, founded on a knowledge, and, indeed, a long experience, both in the present and former administrations, of his distinguished talents and qualifications, to render his services available at the shortest possible delay.

85. No situation, under the existing establishment of Government, adequate to his rank and consideration in the service, was vacant, and there was no immediate or any definite prospect of a suitable opening.

86. These services revived, in the mind of the Governor-General, the consideration of a question, very lately under deliberation, for the establishment of a separate Colonial Department, to be placed under the charge of an additional Secretary

to Government. The great accession to business, thrown both upon the members and officers of this Government, by the recent conquests, including those of the French Islands, and in the Eastern Seas, had already been found so oppressive upon the several departments, as to induce an inquiry into the most convenient way of transacting those affairs. A reference was, therefore, made to the Secretaries of Government, whom we requested to report their sentiments upon that subject. Their opinion was unanimous, that a distinct department, for that branch of the public business, was nearly indispensable, and that opinion was supported by a statement of facts, connected with the present overburdened state of the administration in all the departments, which it was impossible not to acknowledge, and, by reasons drawn from that view of the subject, equally difficult to controvert.

87. The Governor-General was prevented from giving his immediate assent to the proposed measure, by motives of public economy alone, and by a reluctance to make so considerable an augmentation of establishment, until its necessity should be ascertained by a somewhat longer trial. The reports of the Secretaries to Government are recorded with the minute, and every week's experience has justified the sentiments they submitted to the Board.

88. The Governor-General was the more strongly induced to reconsider the question, by a sense of the advantage which Government would derive, not only in affording relief to the other departments, but in acquiring the more essential assistance, which the peculiar qualifications possessed by Mr. Tucker, for most of the principal points of public deliberation and business, connected with the Colonies, would afford, by that department being committed to his charge.

89. Upon this proposition, the Governor-General grafted the further modifications of the present arrangements, of placing the Financial Department also under the charge of Mr. Tucker. Government had already experienced his eminent knowledge of that science, and his distinguished talents in that peculiar branch of administration, by the success of the important and

beneficial operations of Finance, which were commenced, and brought nearly to their accomplishment, while he administered that department previous to his departure to Europe.

90. We persuade ourselves that under the present pressure of the Colonial business, upon all the superior officers of Government, and under the considerations above stated, your Honorable Court will be well inclined to sanction and approve the appointment of Mr. Tucker to the office of Colonial and Financial Secretary to Government, with the allowances now enjoyed by the other principal Secretaries to Government.

[B.—Page 349.]

LETTER TO SIR HENRY STRACHEY, BART.

Friern Lodge, Whetstone, 13th April, 1821.

DEAR SIR HENRY,—As you appeared the other day to take an interest in a question in which I am deeply interested, perhaps you will take the trouble to peruse the accompanying notes. It is necessary to hold in mind that the Government had two objects in view in the Financial arrangements which were undertaken in 1810. First—to deprive the Debt of the privilege of being convertible at any time into a Bill of Exchange on the Court of Directors. Secondly—to effect a reduction in the charge of interest.

The first object was accomplished by placing the old Debt in course of payment, and opening a new eight-per-cent. loan, *divested of the privilege of remittance*, for receiving transfers from the former, or subscriptions in money, which should be applied to the discharge of the former. This has been opprobriously designated “the Decoy Loan;” and it is only necessary to mention that a large proportion of the old Debt was transferred to it.

The next proceeding was to effect a reduction in the rate of interest, by placing the new (or Decoy) eight-per-cent. loan in course of payment, and opening a six-per-cent. loan for receiv-

ing transfers and subscriptions;—and this measure also succeeded.

It is very certain that both objects might have been attempted at the same time, and by one single operation—that is, by opening a six-per-cent. loan at once, divested of the privilege of remittance; but this measure, after a great deal of discussion, was judged to be too bold and hazardous. Perhaps it was; and certainly, if it had miscarried, the Public Debt of India would have been ten millions greater than it is at present, even if we had escaped absolute insolvency. But those who accuse me of being the author of the project, do me, perhaps, more justice than they intend or than I deserve; while, in ascribing to me the particular *means* which were adopted, they undoubtedly pass judgment in utter ignorance of the circumstances. It was the chief aim of my public life, while I was employed in the administration of the Finances, to effect a reduction in the charge of interest; but this merit I claim only in common with others—it was not exclusively mine. With respect to the *means* to be employed for accomplishing this great end, I may state to you in confidence, as a confidential officer of the Government, what I never can explain to the Public—my own opinion was in favor of the more direct proceeding; but it was considered, in a quarter which I was bound to respect, of so hazardous a character, as to preclude all idea of its adoption. It was apprehended, in fact, that a large proportion of the Debt, amounting to about thirty millions, would immediately have been transferred to England, where there were no funds forthcoming for its discharge—that the Court of Directors would have been compelled to send back the bills under some most burdensome compromise with their creditors—and that, thus, the only opportunity ever likely to offer of giving the Debt a *local character*, and of reducing the annual charge of interest, would, in all probability, have been lost for ever. All this might have happened, no doubt, and the evil would have been most serious if it had happened; but the prudence and foresight which adopted the safer course of proceeding, constituted no part of my merits.

You will perceive how awkwardly I am placed; but as I can truly say, that throughout my public life I have been anxious only to do my duty to the best of my judgment, I am content to leave my conduct to be judged by the Public, and to stand or fall by the decision which may be pronounced upon it. In offering myself as a candidate for the Direction, my chief object is to obtain occupation—public and honorable employment; but if any individual can believe that I ever counselled a measure involving a breach of faith to the Public, that individual will do right to exclude me for ever from all public trust. He will not, however, do right to pass judgment in ignorance, in this, or any other case. For the rest, I can only say that, whether right or wrong, I shall continue to act always on the principles on which I ever have acted; and those must not trust me for the Future who have reason to disapprove of the Past.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

H. ST. G. TUCKER.

[C.—Page 458.]

The passage in Mr. Mills' speech at the India House, on the 15th of July, 1835, relative to the recall of Lord Heytesbury, to which allusion is made at page 458, is thus printed in the *Asiatic Journal*:

“He might be permitted to observe that, in vacating the appointment of Lord Heytesbury, after it had been so deliberately made, the Right Honorable Baronet, Sir John Hobhouse, had done an act which decidedly militated against the good government of India. Beyond that, he would admit that the Right Honorable Baronet had met the question most manfully in the House of Commons, and also in his communications with the Directors. He had stated that he thought it better that the interests of India should suffer, than that the Minister of the day, whoever he might be, should be defeated.”

I have referred to the speech of Sir John Hobhouse, in the

House of Commons, in reply to Mr. Praed's motion for papers, thinking I should probably find in it the declaration alluded to by Mr. Mills. In this speech the President of the India Board is reported (in the Mirror of Parliament) to have said that he scorned "the miserable pretence of consulting 'measures not men'"—and that it was "better that the authority of the East India Company should receive a shock in India, than that a cordial sympathy should not exist between his Majesty's Ministers and the Governor-General." This may not have been the passage referred to in the India House debate, but the declaration is tantamount to that to which allusion has been made. It should, however, be added, that it is at least doubtful whether Sir John Hobhouse was really the prime agent of Lord Heytesbury's recall. I know at least that Sir Robert Peel told a near relative of his Lordship, that he believed Sir John would have suffered the appointment to take effect—but that it was necessary to conciliate Mr. Hume and the Radicals who were eager to see it cancelled.

THE END.