

THE  
PRELIMINARY DEBATE

AT THE  
EAST-INDIA HOUSE,  
*On Tuesday, the 5th January, 1813,*

ON THE  
NEGOCIATION WITH HIS MAJESTY'S MINISTERS

RELATIVE TO A  
**RENEWAL OF THE CHARTER;**

WITH  
AN APPENDIX  
CONTAINING ALL THE LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS  
REFERRED TO UPON THE SUBJECT.

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*As*  
BY AN IMPARTIAL REPORTER.  

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LONDON:

Printed for BLACK, PARRY, and CO. Leadenhall Street.

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1813.

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Printed by G. S. and Baylis, Great Queen Street,  
Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

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*The subject of the following Debate is of so important a nature, involving the existence of the East-India Company with the prosperity of this Country, that the Reporter feels it an incumbent duty to present it to the Public. He is aware of the interest it must necessarily excite in the breasts of men devoted to the honour, the justice, and the happiness of Great Britain, and he has endeavoured to preserve the sentiments of the several speakers as faithfully, as the hasty sketches of the pen, and the recorded recollections of memory, will allow; and he pledges himself to report the ensuing Debate, which is expected to be the most animating, as it certainly will be the most momentous, with accurate fidelity, having engaged the most eminent short-hand writers expressly for that purpose.*

## PRELIMINARY DEBATES,

&c. &c.

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A General Court of PROPRIETORS was held at the East India House on Tuesday, January the 5th, 1813, for the purpose of taking into consideration the several communications and documents relative to the late negotiation between his *Majesty's Ministers* and the *Committee of Correspondence*, respecting a RENEWAL OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S CHARTER.

The Chair was taken by Sir HUGH INGLIS at twelve o'clock; when the minutes of the last Court having been read as usual, he stated to a large, opulent, and respectable assembly, that the Court of Proprietors had been called, in order that he might submit to their consideration the communications of His Majesty's Government to the Directors, on a most important subject—*the Renewal of the Company's Charter*. From the papers to be laid before them he was sorry to

observe, that the result of those communications was most unfavourable to the views and to the interests of the Company.—The last communication on the subject was contained in a letter from Lord Buckinghamshire; but received the night before, at so very late an hour, it was impossible for him to communicate with others, or indeed to bestow upon it himself all the consideration its importance required. He did not, of course, find himself at liberty to express the sentiments and feelings of the Court of Directors; but, for his own part, he could have no hesitation to confess, that this last letter had made on his mind a most serious and fearful impression.

The first paper laid upon the table contained the minutes of the Secret Committee of Correspondence (No. I. in the Appendix), dated November the 27th, 1812, wherein it was reported to the Committee, that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman had held a conference, that very morning, with the President of the Board of Commissioners, on the subject of renewing the Company's Charter, at which his Lordship (Lord Buckinghamshire) declared it to be the intention of His Majesty's Government, not to abandon the proposition of allowing a direct trade between India and the outports of the United

Kingdom, subject to modifications and restrictions—requesting a conference on the subject with Lord Liverpool and himself. The paper proceeds to state, that after communicating with the Committee of Correspondence,

A letter from the Chairman and Deputy Chairman (No. II. Appendix), dated November 28, 1812, was dispatched to Lord Buckinghamshire, acquainting him, that the Committee received the communication with the deepest concern; that such a measure, even in a most limited and restricted degree, would be highly prejudicial to the public revenue, injurious to the East-India Company, and detrimental to the prosperity of the merchants, manufacturers, traders, and other numerous bodies interested with the commerce of India.

Lord Buckinghamshire's next letter was then read (No. III. Appendix), dated November 28, 1812, requesting that Lord Liverpool, and other members of the Board of Commissioners, might be present at the conference with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

The next document (No. IV.) was a minute of the Secret Court of Directors, held on the 2d day of December, 1812, stating that an unreserved conference had been held between His Majesty's Ministers and the Committee of Cor-

respondence, wherein it was agreed no minutes should be taken.

The next minute (No. V. Appendix) was of a Secret Committee, held on the 15th day of December, merely stating, two conferences had been held between His Majesty's Ministers and the Committee, viz. on the 5th and 12th of December, 1812; but no communication to the Court appeared necessary.

It appeared from the minute (No. VI. Appendix), that the Court, adverting to a statement made, with their approbation, to a General Court, respecting the late conferences on the subject of renewing the Charter, the Court deemed it proper His Majesty's Ministers should be apprized the Court were of opinion, unanimously and decidedly, that the admission of the imports from India to the outports of the United Kingdom would be ruinous and pernicious in its consequences.

A report was then read (No. VII. Appendix) from a Committee of the whole Court, dated December 18th, 1812, stating that the proposition was pregnant with ruin to the Company, rendering them incapable of performing the functions allotted to them, either commercially or politically.

Another document (No. VIII. Appendix) stated this resolution had been communicated to the President of the Board of Commissioners.

Then followed the letters (No. IX. and X. Appendix): after which the Chairman ordered the last letter of Lord Buckinghamshire, before referred to, and received the previous night, to be read (No. XI. Appendix). This letter was dated January the 4th, 1813, stating, that, however His Majesty's Ministers might wish to be frank and explicit on the subject of a Renewal of the Charter, they could not engage in the controversy as a party, to which the objections of the committee would ultimately lead:—conceived His Majesty's Ministers had discharged their duty, by expressing the terms on which they thought it expedient a renewal of the Company's Charter should be recommended to Parliament:—that His Majesty's Ministers had had personal communications with others, who thought themselves interested in the general question; and were not called upon to give an answer, in detail, to the objections of the Company:—that petitions had been presented to Parliament for opening the trade:—in respect to points of regulation, every thing submitted to Parliament would have for its basis *the extension of the import trade*:—he was not aware that any alteration in the go-

vernment of India was intended:—how far the extension might endanger the trade and safety of the British government in India, and the British constitution at home, must be submitted to the wisdom of Parliament:—if the government could not be carried on without the Company, then the Company must remain in its present state; there was no alternative:—no alteration, however, in the government was intended, and all traders would be subject to local regulations.

The *Chairman* rose, and observed that the manner and the importance of the letter now before them, suggested the propriety of its being read a second time. (*Applauses.*)

He proceeded to inform them, that all the papers would be printed and delivered the next day.—He then said—

“ I am happy to declare, that the Court of Directors is ever ready and anxious to give every information in their power to the Court of Proprietors. That which is their duty and their desire at all times, becomes incalculably so, at so momentous a crisis as the present, when the interests and very vitality of the Company are at stake.—It would be highly desirable that the opinions and feelings of the Proprietors should be known and diffused, as quickly and as widely as possible;

but I am sure that, in the present instance, they will act as they always have done, with a deliberate reflection: they will not rush into a hasty decision, without a cautious and severe investigation. It is my recommendation, that the question should be calmly and dispassionately considered in your closets. It will neither be expedient nor wise to form a judgment on the impulse of the moment. Not that I or the Directors would dissuade or prevent immediate discussion: we wish to know the spontaneous sentiments of every Proprietor—we do not deprecate discussion, we anxiously desire it; but we wish to defer decision. Numerous and respectable as the Court now is, there are many not present, of unquestionable talent and interest, whose opinions it were most desirable to be acquainted with, whose arguments it would be gratifying to hear, and who would naturally wish to have an opportunity of expressing their feelings:—it would not be doing them justice, if the question were to be finally determined, without affording them time to reflect deeply, and explain themselves fully, upon the subject.—Dispassionate inquiry, calm deliberation, comprehensive reflection, were to be recommended, at a crisis so anxious and so awful.—The Directors, as a body, have had no time to communicate, no opportunity to form an opi-

nion, and of course no opportunity to offer one, on the subject of this last letter: but the Proprietors can be at no loss to guess what their feelings are.—I will not take upon myself to speak for them; I do not explain their opinion.—The Directors have had no time for meeting to discuss particulars and to consolidate their judgments, in the interval of late last night and eleven o'clock to day; but I, for myself, declare, that I see nothing in Lord Buckinghamshire's last letter, that should persuade us to depart from our former sentiments and resolutions.—We would have met earlier, at any hour whatever, had it been possible to have summoned a meeting; but we have not been able to see each other till our attendance at this Court was required. We shall be glad to hear the sentiments of any Proprietor disposed to indulge us with them now; and to collect what your opinions are, on the subject of an ultimate discussion."

*Mr. Rigby* admitted the necessity of calm and deliberate reflection; but if the moment was awful, and the crisis a fearful one, they were calculated to call forth all the impulse of present feeling, and all the energies of nature.—He applauded the attention, the perseverance, and the talent of the Directors on a trying occasion. The manly and discreet part they

had taken deserved not merely their warmest support but their thanks by acclamation. They must all feel the deepest regret at the unfortunate issue of the negociation: and many would participate with him in feelings of a still stronger nature, on the perusal of Lord Buckinghamshire's most extraordinary letter. His Lordship truly did not condescend to give them any information, but referred them to the petitions on the table of the House of Commons. He was astonished, and full of alarm and indignation, to find any Minister in this country daring enough to make such a declaration, and in a certain degree to upbraid the Company for assuming the patronage of India. The greatest men this country has lately known, Mr. Pitt, and the late Lord Melville, had held and avowed the opinion, that an Administration seizing upon the patronage of India, would infallibly destroy the constitution of this country. Taking a broad and steady view of the whole correspondence, he saw no prospect afforded, no argument adduced, that could persuade any rational mind to wish any change, any deviation of policy, in respect of India: nor, from the face of the documents, did it appear, that the Directors had given even the shadow of occasion

for drawing down upon them such contemptuous treatment as they had received from Government.

*Mr. R. Thornton* (the Deputy Chairman) observed, that his opinions stood upon record: they were unequivocally given, they were universally known; still, on such a momentous occasion, he could not satisfy himself, he should not do his duty if he did not express his present feelings.—The trust committed to his hands was an awful one: it was his determined intention to exercise the functions of office faithfully and intrepidly. He had received the acquiescence and support of the Company in all the negotiations with His Majesty's Government; and while he received such approbation, he would neither betray their interests nor dishonor himself. (*Applauses.*)—Much management and considerable ingenuity had, for several years past, been misapplied, in seducing the opinions and agitating the interests of men. False expectations had been raised, and visionary passions tampered with, in order to induce Petitions to the House of Commons. Air-blown bubbles in all their gaudy colourings, specious as they were empty, were flying in every direction, to astonish the ignorant and allure the unwary.—Terms to which opprobrium had long been applied by custom, had been wrested from their proper meaning, in order to stamp an odium on

what was technically, legally, and justly called, the "well regulated Monopoly" of the East India Company—and all for what? to acquire an extension of trade for individuals, which must inevitably terminate in their final destruction; the gay and splendid scenery would soon fade away, and all their speculations would become as light, as the bubbles of imagination which so fatally deluded them.—What was this, universal panacea, by which this general commerce was to be established?—why, the destruction of the only commerce in the world which remains entire and unshaken:—the destruction of that commerce, which while all other Trading had fallen to pieces, Bonaparte eagerly coveted, as the dearest jewel of his crown: that commerce, which has been the envy of our enemies, the pride of our country, the admiration of mankind. What did this enemy say? "I want ships, colonies, and commerce." The ships, the colonies, and commerce of this Company he is hovering over; hovering over, ready to devour. Well, if the trade is to be opened, our ships will be transformed into revenue cutters. We might keep our colonies, perhaps, but colonization would destroy our territory. As to commerce, legitimate, honorable commerce, it would sink into illicit trade. Our merchants, such of

them who are now dazzled with the gold and silver of India and China, would return to the iron of Birmingham and Sheffield.

The propositions of Government were too irrational to be lasting; as the cause of the Company was just, it required them only to be firm, in order to be successful.

And what is the time when this great commercial revolution is proposed? the time when a bright star of hope had illumined the northern hemisphere, the promised and welcome harbinger of general peace.—If such a peace could be produced on safe and honorable terms; if the usual habits of commerce should again return to us; when the deliverance of Europe is effected, when the loud and general congratulations of joy are rapturously exchanging—how would the East India Company appear, how would they congratulate each other?—in the lamentation, that while commerce is raising her head and smiling all around her, her merchants are despoiled and ruined, her hopes set for ever, her interests wantonly sacrificed to the wild schemes of visionary experiment. It would be much better for them at once to wind up their concerns, to give up all thoughts of India, and seek for other pursuits, than linger on a few years in gradual decay, and then sink into nothing.—He hoped

they would now act, so that, on future reflection, they should not accuse themselves of deserting or neglecting their duty.

*The Rev. Mr. Thirlwall* acceded to the importance and magnitude of the question. He allowed that the great object, the uniting indissolubly the government and the trade of India, were matters of the first consideration; but there were others too, which though of minor importance, might judiciously be added to the weight already in the scale of this great question:—he meant the innumerable families which would be thrown into instant ruin in the immediate circle of the metropolis; the industry that would be palsied, the charities that would be frozen up, the entire depopulation of various parishes, which must inevitably sink in the same ruin with the East-India Company.—If the government and territory were reserved to them, the trade would be divided and dispersed, far from the homes and reach of those whose whole dependance will be divided and dispersed with it:—he called therefore on the justice and humanity of His Majesty's Government, not to press a wanton experiment of certain distress for uncertain advantage:—a distress incalculable in its misery; an advantage, even in its utmost success, trifling and worthless:—he trusted, therefore, that Government would give

up the measure, before the Company should be compelled to come to a final decision.

*Mr. Kennard Smith* could not withhold his testimony of praise to the wise and able conduct of the Directors during the negotiation with His Majesty's Ministers; and he trusted that many other persons present would express their feelings and their sentiments, in order to enable the Chairman to decide upon the answer which ought to be returned to Lord Buckinghamshire's letter.— If they looked back to the charter of James the First, about two centuries ago, they would find the grant was *for ever*, unless it should be found prejudicial to these realms. Is it so found? if not, there can be no reason why any of its provisions and privileges should be taken away. Let it be *proved* to be prejudicial;—that would be perhaps a fair ground for opening its trade or abolishing it altogether;—but *prove* it first, and do not let assertion and power usurp the place of argument and justice.—He was well aware it could not be proved; but he was not convinced that opening the trade would not be prejudicial to these realms. His conviction was to the contrary. From his practical knowledge he felt the most decided assurance that the measure was fraught with destruction, not to the Company only, but to those speculators who

were now revelling in imagination on the spoils of the East. If the trade should be opened to the outports, it would be much better for the Company to resign its charter, to sell its territory and possessions, its buildings and its stores, and every individual of it retire to the occupations of private life. The China trade alone, could not support the expences of the Charter. His Majesty's Ministers could not have seriously reflected on the number of seamen supplied to the navy by East-India shipping.—He adverted to the time of Queen Elizabeth, when not more than six ships sailed to India; and to their present number, a number which supplies an average of 7400 seamen for the navy, exclusive of Lascars. He conceived they had an unquestionable claim on government for the value of their freehold in India, which they enjoyed by a right as firm and unshaken as any freehold which could be held in this country.

*Mr. R. Grant* rose and said: I beg pardon.

*Mr. Chairman*,—Encouraged by the invitation which you have held out to the individual proprietors, to take a part in this discussion, I venture to offer myself, not with any purpose of entering into a detailed consideration of the particular measure respecting the outports, which has been the immediate occasion of calling us together, for that subject will better be discussed

on a future day: but in order to express my surprise at the singular letter with which we have been favoured by one of His Majesty's Ministers; a letter, in which they are pleased explicitly to inform us, that they have every disposition to honor us with a free and unreserved communication of their *sentiments*, but are not at all disposed to communicate their *arguments*. The question, Sir, to which we are reduced by this letter, is indeed one of the utmost seriousness and importance. It is no other than this: whether the Company shall throw themselves on the justice of parliament and of the nation, in a contest with His Majesty's executive government; or whether all the political interests of India, and of England, as connected with India, shall be made the subject of a commercial experiment?

Surprised as I am with the tone of the Minister's letter, I profess myself still more astonished at the matter. We are there told that, unless we accede to the measure proposed, it will be open to the consideration and decision of parliament, whether the political interests involved in the government of India, cannot be effectually provided for under some other system of administration than the present. Open to the consideration and decision of parliament! I thought, Sir, that parliament had considered and decided

the question long ago. I have always of late understood it to be the general opinion of the government, the parliament, and the nation, that the system of the Company was in every view the most eligible organ for the management of the great and complicated interests in question. But I suppose this annunciation of Ministers to be a sort of commentary on a sentiment in the former letter of Lord Buckinghamshire; where he states that, although it be *expedient* to leave the government of India in the hands of the Company, yet there is a *limit* to that expediency. Now, Sir, as I have ever understood that the expediency of the system in the contemplation of Ministers respected the people of India at least as much as the nation at home, I can translate the proposition of Lord Buckinghamshire only into this, that there is a limit to the expediency of governing well:—there is a limit to the care and attention which we are bound to bestow on the security and welfare of the immense population confided to our management. And what, Sir, is that limit? The commercial convenience of the outports.—True, we are under the most solemn obligation to conduct with vigilance and fidelity the administration of that vast empire: but, imperative, sacred, and indispensable as this obligation is,

we shall be too strict, too zealous in our construction of it, if, in the prosecution of our object, we compel a vessel which has cleared outwards from Bristol, to discharge her homeward cargo in the Thames. Thus do ministers weigh the ledger-books of the outports against the great charter of the rights and happiness of fifty millions of men!

Disclaiming, Sir, as I have once already done, any discussion at the present moment respecting the admittance of the outports into the import-trade of India, I will yet just ask, whether, considering this, not as an individual and insulated measure, but in connexion with past events, the Company have no solid ground of objection against it? Have the Company no ground of objection against it, as being one further step in that series of progressive encroachments, which have for some years been taking place on their privileges? Have they no right, without reference to this specific development of the general principle, to resist it on the ground that, if they do not make a stand somewhere, they will lose all? There was a period, when the Company were compelled to contend with Government for all their privileges, commercial and political. That attack on them failed; and it almost seems as if Ministers had converted the siege into a

blockade. First, we were obliged to provide a quantity of extra-tonnage for the individuals;—then, the trade was to be thrown open to private ships:—then, the outports were to be admitted into the export-trade:—now, the outports are to be admitted into the import-trade. And I beg leave to observe, that I mention these, not as encroachments on our commercial privileges, though even in that view they might well bear remark; but as encroachments on the resources of the Company, and as therefore more and more trenching on that fund, on which the Company must rely for the due discharge of their political duties. If we are to judge, according to the rule of all worldly wisdom, from the past to the future, is it possible to doubt what will be the next step? According to the present intention, the free traders are to conduct their concerns, subject to the regulations of the local governments of India, and they are to be completely debarred from the trade of China. Can there be a doubt that their next attack will be on these obstacles? To do them justice, they make no secret of their wishes. And the imprescriptible right of Britons to a free trade, commercial liberty, the right of loco-motion, all those topics on which the advocates of the private traders are apt to dilate, somewhat more extravagantly

than wisely, will be exactly as good then as at the present hour.

I do not mean to insinuate that the Government,—and I would observe that, by that term, I do not mean this or that Government, but the National Government,—entertain a deliberate and systematic design of annihilating the Company. But it is in the nature of things. It is in the nature of power to be encroaching and aggressive. And if this train of consecutive aggressions is to continue, it is too easy to perceive what will be its termination. Left in possession of all our political functions, but stripped, one by one, of all the means and facilities which we possess for the exercise of those functions, we shall at length be compelled to resign every thing without a struggle, and shall then have the comfort of being told that it is a voluntary surrender. The edifice will be permitted to remain entire and untouched; no hostile hand, ostensibly stretched out against it; no warlike engine threatening its walls; but, in the mean time, it is gradually undermined, and, when it collapses with a great ruin, it will be said to have fallen by its own weight. The familiar but lively and happy illustration employed by a great departed orator in parliament, may be applied to this subject;

we shall be checkmated with all our pieces on the board.—(*Applause.*)

I cannot help thinking, Sir, that, in the present crisis, it would be well to remind Ministers and the public, of the services which the Company have rendered both to this country and to India. On this head, indeed, the greatest misrepresentations prevail. That such services have, in fact, been rendered, not one of your antagonists ventures to deny; but it is not uncommonly insinuated in the publications which have appeared against you, that they were the result of accident, or that the merit of them exclusively belongs to the enlightened men whom you have chanced to employ. The Company, in the mean time, are charged with having no concern for the interests, either of their country or of their subjects, with being wholly absorbed in a selfish regard for their advantage.

If it be indeed true that the Company are occupied solely by an attachment to their own interests, I yet do not know that the advocates of free trade are exactly the persons the best authorised to reproach them with that failing. I am by no means persuaded, that the motives by which those gentlemen are actuated are of a much more exalted nature.—(*Applause.*)

Is it, however, the fact, that the Company have no claims on the gratitude either of their country or of their subjects? Let history answer that question. I regret—I do not palliate—the disorders which, in some instances, took place at the commencement of their government as a territorial power. Those were disorders, however, naturally incident to a recent acquisition of dominion, especially to an acquisition accompanied by the strongest individual temptations; and they were, as soon as possible, corrected by the Company at home. But, while these misdeeds, whatever they were, are, on every occasion, studiously trumpeted forth, the eminent services rendered by the Company, both to this country and to that, are completely overlooked, or are ascribed to any other cause than good intention. Why, Sir, when, about the time of the civil commotions in England, the Indo-British trade, from the effect of those troubles, was for near thirty years in hourly danger of annihilation;—when, at other periods, both anterior and subsequent, that trade was in hourly danger of extinction from the formidable malice of European rivals;—when it weathered those storms by exertions of fortitude and perseverance unparalleled in the commercial annals of the world;—do the Company, who conducted it, deserve no

credit for their management and public spirit? When the Indo-British settlements were, for twenty years together, engaged in an arduous struggle with the hostility of France, and that hostility directed by some of the ablest public functionaries, civil and military, that France has ever produced;—when they endured through that dreadful season;—when they not only endured through it, but, having entered it as a set of comparatively insignificant ports, emerged from it an empire;—do the counsels and conduct of the Company, who supplied the means of these achievements, deserve no praise for the result? Then,—as to the inhabitants of India,—when Lord Clive repaired to that country, for the second time, as a governor,—when he went out in the character, no longer of a soldier, but of a pacificator,—to check irregularities, to reform abuses, to consolidate the dominions acquired, and to secure the rights and welfare of the natives,—did he undertake this important service by accident, or was he expressly delegated to it by the votes of a triumphant majority of this very court? When, afterwards, the same illustrious man,—and the incident deserves notice, as not wanting applicability to some parts of the present discussion,—sensible of the irregularities and atrocities committed by the free

traders up the country, and anxious to hush the groans of the suffering natives; chased the whole tribe of those oppressors to Calcutta;—was this act purely the emanation of his own great mind, or do your records exhibit the precise instructions which he had received from the Company at home for the accomplishment of the reformation in question? I cannot help mentioning another illustrious and revered name, a name dear (I doubt not) to every individual present. When Lord Cornwallis adopted the measure of the perpetual settlement,—and though there still subsist some differences of opinion respecting the policy of that measure, there never were two opinions as to its magnanimity,—did he act by chance, or entirely from himself, or are not the express instructions of the Company on record, in which they enjoin on him the full application of his comprehensive judgment, with the view of ameliorating the condition of the natives in that very respect? All those laws and regulations, under the protection of which the natives repose,—which secure to them a pure administration of justice, a freedom from European competition in the purchase and management of land, a tranquil enjoyment of their property,—the Magna Charta, as they may be called, and Bill of Rights of the population of Hindostan,—did they spring

up spontaneously, did the servants of the Company call them from the ground by a stamp of the foot?—or are your voluminous records pregnant with evidence to shew, that the principles of all those improvements had been the previous subjects of your deep and anxious deliberation, of your minute and positive orders?

I have the firmest belief, Sir, in the capabilities of individual energy to effect mighty things. But, at the same time, it is plain that a public functionary can accomplish little, unless he is countenanced and supported by his principals. The great men to whom I have alluded, acted greatly; but whence did they acquire their first movement?—whence was derived the first impulse of their great actions? Why, Sir, from within these very walls which are now decorated with their effigies. You have a right to consecrate their dead renown; for you formed their living greatness\*.

The question then recurs, Sir; is all this system of establishments, the fruit of so much labour, achieved by so much solicitude, matured

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\* The wall of the room in which the Court of Proprietors meet has niches, in which are placed the statues of Lord Clive, Lord Cornwallis, Sir Eyre Coote, and other eminent men.

by time, justified by experience, to be made the sport of a commercial experiment? Grant all the commercial arguments of our opponents; but is it possible not to see that a commercial measure may lead to the most fatal political consequences? That such is the strong infallible tendency of the particular measure before us, is clearly proved in the correspondence of the Directors with the Government,—proved by arguments, to which the Government refuse an answer. It menaces the subversion of the constitution of India; and, permit me to add, by no very remote consequence, the subversion of that of England also.

It is curious to observe, Sir, how differently men estimate the evil of political changes in this country and in India. In England we have a constitution which is the work of ages, and the wonder of the world. For this constitution we glory in cherishing even a bigotted attachment; and if any innovator proposes for our adoption a measure which appears to touch its fundamental principles, we hear him no longer;—we cry, “away with your commercial calculations! we cannot afford such an experiment! *Nolumus leges Anglice mutari!*” Thus we all act—and we act well. But what, meantime, is our conduct respecting India? There, also, is a con-

stitution, the slow creation of years;—a constitution which has not, indeed, attained theoretical perfection,—perhaps not even all the practical perfection of which it is capable,—I am not competent to judge of that,—but of which I will yet be bold to say, that, considering the peculiar circumstances of the country; considering the nature and political capacity of the natives; considering the relations subsisting between the two countries, it is scarcely a less wonderful work, scarcely a less important achievement, than the British constitution itself. Yet when we object to an innovation proposed by Ministers, on the ground that it will probably affect the vitals of this constitution, they are pleased gravely to assure us, that our apprehensions are *probably* unfounded; and we are charged with a spirit of captiousness, contumacy, and war, because, in a case which is absolutely one of life and death to the natives of Hindostan, we refuse to be put off with contingent remedies and conjectural safeguards.—(*Applause*).

Amidst the provincial wit, Sir, which has, during the course of this controversy, been pointed against the Company, I have found it said, that all the reasonings of that body resolve themselves into an argument *ad misericordiam*,—an address to the compassion of the public.

One of these reasonings *ad misericordiam* you have heard from a gentleman below me (Mr. Thirlwall), and I would ask whether it contained nothing of an impressive nature,—nothing to touch the feelings of humanity? For my own part, without the hope and without the desire of rivalling the ingenious mirth to which I have alluded, I will say, not wittily but gravely, that were I to address the public on the present subject, mine *should* be an argument *ad misericordiam*. It *should* be an appeal to their compassionate feelings:—but to their compassionate feelings not in behalf of the Company, however likely to be ruined by adventurers; nor in behalf of adventurers, however likely to ruin themselves—Mine should be an appeal to the compassion of the people of England in favour of the people of India. I would earnestly remind them that a system in which the welfare and happiness of Hindostan, in a political point of view, are essentially bound up, a system admitted to have this character (for never let that be forgotten) on all hands, may, by the rage of commercial speculation, be utterly pulled to pieces in a few years. I would intreat that, in their anxiety to settle the discontents of a comparatively small number of persons at home, they would not run the risk of unsettling the content.

and tranquillity of the immense population dependent on them in India. I would beseech them not to be more swayed by the din and tumult which pervades a small part of their own country, than by the profound and uncomplaining stillness which reigns throughout that vast continent. I would implore them to do by the people of India as they would do by themselves; and then I have not the smallest doubt of the result.

*Mr. Smith* (the Bank Director) was of opinion, that the most advisable proceeding in the present stage of the business would be, to adopt the sentiments of the Chairman, and adjourn to an early period.

The *Chairman* signifying his concurrence,

*Mr. Kemard Smith* moved, that thanks be given to the Court of Directors, for the firm, zealous, and vigilant conduct which they had hitherto evinced for the interests of the Proprietors, concluding with a resolution of adjournment to the 19th instant.

*Mr. Lewis* requested, that the Resolutions of the General Court of the 5th May last might be read. (No. XIV., Appendix.)

*Mr. Rigby* thought the document just read, of such importance as to require the most extensive circulation, and enquired whether, in the discussion with Ministers, they had been given to

understand, that a modification, with respect to exporting the produce of this country, would be admitted?—and was answered by

The *Chairman*, that the Charter of 1793 permitted an annual exportation of that sort, to the extent of 3000 tons, which extent had never been taken advantage of, the exports principally consisting of wines, which were not the manufacture of this country—at least he hoped not!—(*A laugh.*)

The motion of thanks and adjournment being seconded and put,

*Mr. Hume*, in addressing the *Chairman*, declared it was not his original intention to deliver any opinion on the present subject, but he was induced to depart from that resolution in consequence of the turn which the discussion had taken.—He objected to uniting a vote of thanks to the *Directors* with the resolution of adjournment—he had not entirely made up his mind whether they deserved praise or censure. From many observations which had been made, it appeared as if the question was not a relation to the outports being admitted to a share of the import trade; that question seemed to him to have been entirely departed from. The language of *Ministers* was this—you must concede whatever we think necessary, or your Charter will not be renewed. It had been stated in the *House of Commons*

by the late Mr. Perceval, that certain preliminaries had been agreed upon between the Government and the Company. The Court of Directors had called upon Ministers for their decided answer—an answer had been returned which he certainly could not disapprove. The true question is this,—will the Company consent to the trade being thrown open? in that case Government it is supposed, will not interfere in the interior administration of India. Ought the port of London, in this general state of commercial privation, to enjoy privileges which no other port possessed? The Company's right to a trade in India was founded on a statute of Parliament; by which the duration of the right was limited. On this point, the Ministers he thought had given the Directors a proper rub. Without concurring with all his positions, he admired the eloquence of the gentleman who spoke last (Mr. R. Grant), and hoped to be gratified with many more of his speeches. He was sensible that he himself had wandered from the subject (*hear, hear*), which was not much a matter of surprise; as it seemed generally to have been lost sight of—he was of opinion as the discussion was to be adjourned, so might the vote of thanks: (*Here were loud cries of Question, Question*), when the Chairman requested, that as much praise had been so handsomely bestowed on the Directors, it

*was but fair to hear what might be alleged against them; it was true policy to hear both sides of a question—when*

*Mr. Hume resumed—by asking whether the trade to Bengal, Madras, and Bombay, had afforded sufficient means for paying their dividends? Was it proper, was it prudent then to quarrel with Ministers about a trade which he was prepared to prove had for the last fifteen years produced nothing or next to nothing? He was not prepared to say whether the Directors deserved praise or not; he wished for time to consider that point, and might perhaps at their next meeting, be equally disposed with any other gentleman to support a vote of thanks; and with respect to other points introduced into the present discussion, his opinion was, they should be reserved for the consideration of Parliament and the Ministers.*

*Mr. Grant (a Director) said he did not rise to contend for the vote of approbation that had been proposed. He had no wish (and he was sure the gentleman behind the bar had no wish) to carry the Proprietors, in this respect, further than their own spontaneous judgment should incline them to go. But though it had not been his intention, nor he believed the intention of the Directors in general, to offer any opinions to the Proprietors on that day, the speech of the*

honourable gentleman who had just sat down (Mr. Hume), called for some observation. The honourable gentleman had assumed that the question before the Proprietors was, whether they should agree to the proposition of Ministers respecting the outports? Mr. Grant said there was no such question submitted to the Court. The Proprietors had been called together on that day, in order to be made acquainted with the further correspondence which had taken place between His Majesty's Ministers and the Court of Directors, and not to produce any immediate question on the matter of that correspondence, but that the Proprietors, after having had an opportunity of fully considering it, should determine on the time proper to be taken for the consideration of it, and the day on which they should meet again. The only question, in short, before the Court, was the motion recently made for approving the conduct of the Directors. But the honourable gentleman, following his erroneous assumption, had gone on to argue, as if the question respecting the outports were a detached insulated question that might be settled without affecting other great parts of the Indian system. He had supposed indeed, that the object really in dispute, between Government and the Company, was the *Indian Trade*. In both these assumptions the honou-

ble gentleman was mistaken. It was not the trade with India, as such, for which the Company chiefly contended. That trade it was admitted had been of late years no great object of profit. The Company resisted the importation of Indian commodities to the outports, because they apprehended, with great reason, that the consequence would be the smuggling of tea to a large extent, in violation of the Company's China monopoly. And the loss that would hence ensue, was not to be contemplated merely as commercial loss. The China trade was the source of the profit which enabled the Company to pay their dividend, and on the payment of the dividend depended the subsistence of the Company in a state fit for the performance of the high political functions assigned to them. The admission of the imports from India to the outports of England, therefore, involves the political existence of the Company as administrators of the Indian empire. If the honorable gentleman had perused the printed papers with the least attention, he would have found that this was the argument of the Company.

The honorable gentleman had also assumed, that the Directors had demanded a categorical answer from His Majesty's Ministers on the grand question. This was another mistake. They had only asked for the informations on which Ministers had been induced to declare in favour

of the outports, and for the whole detail of the plan which they had formed for the government of British India.

In asking for these things they had asked for nothing new. In the settlement of the Charter of 1793, the eminent men who conducted the national affairs at that time, communicated to the Court of Directors not only the details of their own plan, but the demands of British manufacturers and other persons hostile to the privileges of the Company, with the arguments used by those parties. This was what the Directors had now asked. They were told that the discussions between the merchants claiming the right of importing to the outports, and His Majesty's Ministers, were carried on *viva voce*; but it might be presumed, that some minutes of conversations so important might have been taken.

The honorable gentleman had thought fit to censure the Court for meddling with the topic of the British constitution, in their correspondence with the King's Ministers. This was a strange accusation. Was not every subject of this free country interested in the constitution, and entitled to contend for the care of it in all public measures? Were not the Company, and the whole nation, deeply concerned in maintaining

the Constitution in its vigour and purity? And the Directors, as acting for the Company, and as free men, having a stake in the country, were fully warranted to express their solicitude on the subject, when it was so evidently and greatly concerned.

Mr. Grant added, that before he sat down, he wished to say a word on the present state of the negotiation. His Majesty's Ministers had declared their wish to discuss, in the most full, free, and candid manner, all depending points. The Court of Directors had, on their part, amply stated their reasons for every position they advanced; but he must take leave to say, the Board of Commissioners had not answered those arguments—instead of returning arguments, they had given only decisions. But if any one thing was now essential, it was a clear and thorough understanding between the parties:—this was proper for the sake of the public, and due to the Proprietors of India stock, whose all was at stake. This was what the Directors all along aimed at; what they still wished; and following up the subject with a spirit of conciliation, it would be no fault of their's, if the desired information were not obtained, and every thing satisfactorily adjusted at last. (*Applause*).

Mr. Weyland was desirous that the adjournment should be only for a week—The question

turned on this point, whether the regulations proposed by Government would benefit the population of India and Great Britain?—The greater delay in their exertions, he considered the greater danger would accrue. In political controversy, prudence should sometimes take the precedence of generosity. On this principle, therefore, he should wish the last letter of Lord Buckinghamshire to be the last ministerial document on their table, as it was certainly the weakest—it was not the letter of a statesman—it was, when analyzed, absolute nonsense. He wished an adjournment for one week, and confidently trusted that they would zealously exert themselves, individually and collectively, to frustrate all invasion upon their chartered rights.

After various observations as to fixing the day of adjournment;

The *Chairman* stated, that although the Directors were desirous of meeting the wishes of the Proprietors in every respect, he considered, that as various meetings of ship owners, ship builders, merchants, and others deeply concerned in the present question, were to be held in the course of next week, the original day for adjournment would be the most convenient and advisable.—He informed the Proprietors, that Ministers had been applied to, for the reasons which had induced them to depart from those

rooted plans they had formerly adopted themselves. That great statesman, the late Lord Melville, was decidedly of opinion, that every article of India trade should be lodged in the warehouses of the Company, and sold in that room. (No. XII, Appendix.)—On this point he had the entire and unequivocal concurrence of his illustrious colleague, Mr. Pitt. That their goods should be brought into the port of London, was a fundamental article in the political and commercial creed of the East India Company. (*Hear! hear! hear!*)—It seems strange, indeed, for any man to say that he is not concerned in supporting his own rights—what can be meant by Ministers having given the Directors a *proper rub*? What! is not an Englishman to maintain his own rights? Is he not to speak his opinion honestly and frankly in his own cause? This is the birthright of an Englishman, and God forbid it should ever be wrested from him—it was a right he would give up to no Ministers. The Court of Directors had asked them, the reasons of changing their former sentiments and resolutions? they (the Proprietors) perhaps might be persuaded or convinced by them. It should be distinctly understood, that the Directors are not desirous of restraining the exports to the port of London, but of confining the imports to it, as a measure of vital consequence to the very existence

of the Company. The profits upon the trade, certainly had been lessened, but this was owing to captures and shipwreck:—but, will the out-ports be more exempt from such disasters than the Company? The profits must naturally fluctuate upon all commercial undertakings. (The Chairman here alluded to an opinion given by Lord Castlereagh in the House of Commons on a former occasion, No. XIII. Appendix.) The Court of Directors were not anxious for a vote of thanks, but to deserve one. He had the highest opinion of His Majesty's Ministers as individuals; but this should not induce him to sacrifice to them one iota of his duty or of the Company's rights.

*Mr. Alderman Atkins* could wish to hear how the honorable gentleman (*Mr. Hume*) would answer the arguments of the Chairman; he was convinced that they were not to be answered. If the question was that of opposing the interests of the Company to those of the Country, there was not a single Proprietor that would hesitate between the duty and the sacrifice—there was no such collision of interests—the question was, whether the interests of the Company should be sacrificed, not to those of the Country but to popular mistake, to the delusion of experiment, to the cravings of speculation. One establishment for the protection of the trade and shipping alone for the port of London, had cost half a

million of money; millions had been expended upon others—more than 30,000 persons were employed in these establishments—if the exclusive trade is done away, these must all be driven from their wonted habits of industry; to seek, as they best could, a precarious subsistence—"You take away their life if you do take away the means whereby they live." It cannot be forgotten too, that the Company had furnished Government with 20,000 tons of shipping, amounting to fourteen sail, to whose assistance in a great measure the splendid victory over the Dutch at Camperdown may be attributed.—Could Government look to divided interests, scattered property, and unequal shipping, for so desirable an aid in future emergencies? It was much to be lamented that any shade of difference should exist on the question of adjournment, and on that account he could wish it were separated from the motion of thanks.

*Mr. Hume* (in explanation) considered his opinion had been so guardedly expressed, as not to be thought imputing blame to the Directors. If any loss should be sustained by the measures of Government, they are bound to give ample remuneration.

After a few words the motion of Thanks was united to that of Adjournment *with one dissentient voice, that of Mr. Hume.*

## APPENDIX.

MINUTES OF THE

COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE

IN 1812.

No. 1.

*At a Secret Committee of Correspondence, the 27th  
November, 1812.*

The Chairman reported to the Committee, that he and the Deputy Chairman had this morning a conference with the President of the Board of Commissioners, on the subject of the Renewal of the Company's Charter, at which his Lordship declared it to be the intention of His Majesty's Ministers, not to abandon the proposition they had made, for allowing a direct trade between India and the outports of the United Kingdom; but that the proposition might be modified, by confining the ports to which ships shall be allowed to import goods from India, to a number less than that, to which the Warehousing Act now extends. Lord Buckinghamshire, however, was desirous, before resuming the correspondence relating to it, that the Committee of Correspondence should hold a conference with Lord Liverpool and himself upon the subject.

The Chairman further stated, that, in reply to Lord Buckinghamshire, the Deputy Chairman and himself declined making any observation at present, but stated their intention to communicate the substance of his Lordship's remarks to the Committee of Correspondence, and also expressed their wish, that the Committee might have the honour of waiting upon his Lordship, previously to the proposed conference with Lord Liverpool, to which Lord Buckinghamshire consented.

The Committee, in consequence, resolved to assemble at eleven o'clock on Tuesday next, for the purpose of deliberating upon the subject of the above communication, previously to waiting upon Lord Buckinghamshire, at the hour of two on that day.

## No. II.

*Letter from the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to  
the Right Honorable the Earl of Buckinghamshire.*

*East-India House, 23th November, 1812.*

MY LORD,

We have the honor to acquaint your Lordship, that we have communicated to a Secret Committee of Correspondence the substance of the conversation which we had yesterday the honour of holding with your Lordship, Mr. Wallace, and Mr. Sullivan, and in which it was notified to us, that the opinion of His Majesty's Government remains unaltered, regarding the expediency of not confining the import trade from the East-Indies to the port of London.

The Committee received this communication with the deepest concern and regret, its Members unanimously concurring with us in opinion, that should the proposed extension of the trade, even to a small number of the outports of the kingdom, be sanctioned by the Legislature, the measure will be highly prejudicial to the public revenue, injurious to the East-India Company, and detrimental to the prosperity of the merchants, manufacturers, traders, and other numerous bodies interested in the commerce with India, as now carried on through the channel of the river Thames. The Committee being still desirous of an opportunity of renewing their representations to your Lordship upon this important question, before any communication is made to the Court on the subject, have directed us to request the honor of a conference with your Lordship for that purpose. Should it be perfectly convenient to your Lordship to receive the Deputation on Tuesday next, at two o'clock, we shall be able to lay the result of the conference before the Court on the following day.

We have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your Lordships most obedient humble servants,

(Signed) HUGH INGLIS,  
ROBERT THORNTON,

The Right Hon. the Earl of Buckinghamshire,

&c. &c. &c.

## No. III.

*Letter from the Right Honorable the Earl of Buckinghamshire to the Chairman.*

SIR, *India Board, 28th November, 1812.*

I had the honor of receiving your letter of this day, proposing that the Secret Committee of Correspondence should wait upon me at this Board on Tuesday next.

I shall be happy to have the honor of seeing them; but as I am desirous that Lord Liverpool, and other Members of the Board, should be present at the interview, and as I find that twelve o'clock will be more convenient to them than two, you will, I hope, have no objection to make the appointment for the former hour.

I have the honor to be

Your most obedient and faithful humble servant,

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

Sir Hugh Inglis, Bart.  
&c. &c. &c.

## No. IV.

*At a Secret Court of Directors, held on Wednesday, the 2d December 1812.*

The Chairman acquainted the Court, that a meeting took place yesterday, at the Board, between several of His Majesty's Ministers and the Committee of Correspondence, upon the subject of the renewal of the Company's exclusive privileges, when it was agreed, that no minutes should be then taken, in order to afford the most unreserved mode of carrying on the discussion; at the conclusion of which it was understood, that His Majesty's Ministers would communicate, in writing, their sentiments upon the whole of the subject.

## No. V.

*At a Secret Court of Directors, held on Tuesday, the  
15th December 1812.*

Minutes of the 2d instant were read and approved.  
The Chairman stated, that two conferences between His Majesty's Ministers and the Committee of Correspondence had taken place since the 2d instant, viz. on the 5th and 12th instant, but that he had nothing further to communicate to the Court in consequence.

## No. VI.

*At a Secret Court of Directors, held on Wednesday,  
the 16th December 1812.*

The Court adverting to the statement which the Chairman had, with their approbation, made to the General Court to-day, as to the late conferences with His Majesty's Ministers, upon the subject of renewing the Company's exclusive privileges, and this Court deeming it a proper mark of respect to His Majesty's Ministers, that they should be apprized of the same as early as possible,

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman were requested to wait on the President of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India to-morrow, to communicate to his Lordship what had passed in the General Court this day, and to state to his Lordship, that the Court of Directors continue decidedly to entertain the opinion which they have formerly expressed to His Majesty's Ministers, as to the ruinous consequences of admitting the imports from India to the outports of this kingdom.

## No. VII.

*At a Secret Court of Directors, held on Friday, the  
18th December 1812.*

The Court having resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole Court,

And being resumed, the following report from the Committee of the Whole Court was read :

“ The Committee taking into consideration the present state of the negotiation with H's Majesty's Ministers for the renewal of the Company's exclusive privileges, deem it to be highly important, that the sentiments of the Court of Directors, upon the proposition brought forward for admitting the imports from India to the outports of this kingdom, should be unequivocally known.”

“ The Committee therefore recommend to the Court to pass a resolution, stating that the proposition in question is, for various reasons already set forth in the Court's writings, pregnant with ruin to the affairs of the Company, inasmuch as it would render them incapable of performing the functions allotted to them, as well in their commercial as in their political capacity, and that the Court cannot therefore, consistently with their duty to their Constituents, recommend to them the adoption of such a proposition.”

And it was, on the question,

*Resolved Unanimously*, That this Court approve the said report.

And the Chairman and Deputy Chairman were requested to wait on the Right Honorable the President of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India, and to communicate to His Lordship the above proceedings of this day.

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#### No. VIII.

*At a Secret Court of Directors, held on Tuesday, the 22d December 1812.*

The Chairman acquainted the Court, that in obedience to their resolution of the 18th instant, the Deputy and himself, on Saturday last, waited on the Right Honorable the President of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India, with a copy of the minutes of the Secret Court of the 18th instant.

## No. IX.

*Letter from the Right Honorable the Earl of Buckinghamshire to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the East-India Company.*

GENTLEMEN,      *India Board, 24th Dec. 1812.*

The conferences held at this Board with the Committee of Correspondence, having had for their object the most unreserved and candid discussions upon points of the greatest importance, with respect to the renewal of the East-India Company's Charter, and it having been understood that no further steps should be taken upon the subject, until a communication was made by me, in an official shape, to the Court of Directors, it was not without some surprize that the copy of their resolution of the 18th instant was received by His Majesty's Government, because that resolution, adopted under such circumstances, appear to them to have for its object an abrupt termination to all discussion.

They cannot, however, consider it the less incumbent upon them, through you, as the proper official channel, to bring before the Court of Directors the principle upon which the opinions I have to apprise you of have been formed, in order to present to the Proprietors and the Public a correct view of a subject to which so much importance is attached.

I shall, therefore, convey to you the sentiments of His Majesty's Government, precisely in the terms I should have done, if no intimation had been made of the resolution of the Court of Directors of the 18th instant; and with that object I proceed to inform you, that with regard to those points, to which the attention of the Committee of Correspondence has been chiefly directed at the conferences held at this Board, the principle uniformly maintained, as the basis of any arrangement for the renewal of the East-India Company's Charter, viz. that the merchants of this country have as substantial claim to as much liberty of trade as they can enjoy, without injury to other important national interests, cannot be departed from.

It was in the hope that the opening of the export trade with India to the merchants of the city of London and of the outports, whilst the import was confined to the port of London, might not be found inconsistent with this principle, that a disposition was felt by the Government to propose an arrangement to that effect.

In consequence, however, of the promulgation of such an intention, several persons, interested in the commerce of the outports, represented in the strongest terms, that the proposed limitation of the import trade from India, rendered the extension of no value to them: and they declared themselves prepared to maintain, that this limitation was not called for by any adequate motive of public interest.

They urged their claim to an equal participation in the general trade to India, and their conviction, that the ground upon which the exclusion in favour of the port of London was defended, *viz.* the additional danger of smuggling, could not be supported, and they were satisfied that the alleged danger might be obviated by revenue regulations. They also entered largely into the subject of the China trade, contending strenuously against the renewal of the Company's exclusive Charter; and stated their reasons for believing, that measures might be adopted by which that trade could be opened, without injury to the revenue, and without hazarding the continuance of the intercourse with the Emperor of China's dominions.

The importance attached to these representations, induced His Majesty's Government to revise the arrangement which had been in contemplation; and although they did not see cause, under all the circumstances bearing upon this question, to alter the opinion they had entertained, of the propriety of continuing the existing restrictions upon the commercial intercourse with China, and of preserving to the Company the monopoly of the tea trade, they nevertheless felt, that the merchants belonging to the outports had established a claim against an absolute restriction of the import trade to the port of London.

Under this impression, I addressed my letter to you on the 27th of April ultimo.

The observations made by the Committee of Correspondence, in their reply of the 29th of the same month, did not fail to engage the serious attention of His Majesty's Government, but after the best examination of those observations, aided by all the information they have obtained from the Boards of Customs and Excise, they are not enabled to concur in the opinion, that the proposed extension of the import trade from India would be productive of any great increase of smuggling, and certainly not to the extent stated by the Court of Directors.

It is conceived, that the apprehensions entertained on this account might be obviated by various regulations, such as confining the trade to those ports which are, or may be so circumstanced, as to afford security to the due collection of the revenue; by the limitation of it to vessels of four hundred tons burthen; by attaching the forfeiture of the ship and cargo to the discovery of any illicit articles on board; by an extension of the manifest act; by regulations for checking the practice of smuggling in the ships of the Company; as well as by other provisions, too minute to be entered into at present, but which will, of course, be attended to, in discussing the details of the subject.

I am persuaded it will not escape your observation, that from obvious considerations, the English Channel must, at all times, especially in time of peace, afford facilities and inducements for smuggling, which do not occur elsewhere to the same extent, on account of the clandestine traffic already established, and the ready communication with the opposite shore.

But, with respect to the whole of this part of the question, it is impossible to lose sight of the deep interest which the Government must feel in the prevention of smuggling. The interests of the Company are, no doubt, involved in it; but those of the Government are still more concerned: and it cannot be supposed that they would bring forward any proposition which appeared to them likely to endanger a revenue

of from three to four millions; or that, if a defalcation should unexpectedly arise, they would not immediately take measures for applying a remedy. The Company have, therefore, an ample ground of confidence, not only in the disposition of Government, but in their effectual co-operation on those points, on which the Court of Directors appear to feel the greatest anxiety, and on which they urged their strongest objections to the proposed arrangement.

The several articles which may be imported from the countries within the limits of the Company's Charter, and which are charged with an *ad valorem* duty, although, with the exception of Tea, they bear a very small proportion to the whole of the revenue collected from the trade from India and China, are nevertheless of sufficient importance to demand the attention of Government, as the question may affect the interests of the East-India Company, as well as those of the public revenue.

With this view, it will be necessary to consider whether, with respect to some of them, a rated duty might not be substituted, and whether regulations may not be made for the security of the duty *ad valorem* on those articles which shall continue to be so charged, and which, at the same time, shall prevent their being purchased at a price, likely to operate injuriously to the manufacturers of this country.

The justice of the observations, respecting the additional number of Europeans that would find their way to India in consequence of the extension of the trade, must be admitted to a certain extent; but it is obvious, that this danger would arise from the extension of the export trade to India, and would scarcely be lessened by confining the import trade to the Port of London. Every individual, during his residence in India, would of course be subject to the existing regulations of the local Governments.

The situation of Lascars, who are occasionally employed in the navigation of ships from India to this country, would demand the humane interposition of the Legislature; and there can be no doubt that effec-

tual provision for their maintenance while in England, and for their return to India, will be made.

Having gone through the principal points to which our recent conferences have related, it may be proper for me to apprise you, that His Majesty's Government are of opinion, that the establishment of King's troops, which may be requisite for the preservation of the peace and security of the British possessions in India, must depend upon circumstances that it would be difficult to anticipate; but as the financial situation of the Company may render it necessary that the numbers to be maintained at their charge should be limited, there can be no objection to propose to Parliament, to specify that number by legislative enactment.

I have thus endeavoured to bring the sentiments of His Majesty's Government before you, with the same candor that has been evinced in our recent discussions; and I can venture confidently to assure you, that my colleagues, as well as myself, are most anxious to promote such an adjustment between the Public and the Court of Proprietors, as may be satisfactory to all parties.

The expediency of adhering to that system, by which the Government of India has been administered through the intervention of the Company, is strongly felt by His Majesty's Government; but it must not be supposed, that there are no limits to that expediency, or that there are no advantages which might result from a different course.

It is for the Court of Proprietors to decide, whether their own interests, as well as those of the numerous persons depending upon them, both at home and abroad, can best be preserved by their rejection of, or acquiescence in, those conditions, upon which alone, consistent with their public duty, His Majesty's Government can submit a proposition to Parliament for the renewal of the Charter.

You, Gentlemen, must be aware, that from its approaching expiration, provision must be made, without delay, for the future government of India; and that His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, in his speech

at the opening of the present session, has called upon Parliament to make such provision.

I have the honor to be,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient and faithful humble servant,

(Signed) BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman  
of the Court of Directors.

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No. X.

*Letter from the Chairman and Deputy Chairman  
to the Right Honourable the Earl of Buckinghams-  
shire.*

*East-India House, 30th December 1812.*

MY LORD,

WE were honoured, on the 25th instant, with the letter which your Lordship was pleased to address to us on the preceding day, and have laid it before the Court of Directors. We are instructed by the Court to acquaint your Lordship that a General Court of Proprietors of East-India Stock has been summoned, for the special purpose of taking into consideration the important subjects treated of in your Lordship's letter, and we shall lose no time in submitting to your Lordship the result of the deliberations at that meeting.

In reference to the first paragraph of your Lordship's letter, in which the resolution passed by the Court, on the 18th instant, is stated to have caused some surprise to His Majesty's Government, as appearing to have for its object an abrupt termination to all discussion, we are desired by the Court of Directors respectfully to offer the following explanation.

Your Lordship is aware, that at the commencement of the recent conferences on the subject of the Renewal of the Company's Charter, it was agreed between your Lordship and the Deputation from the Court, that no minutes should be taken of what passed in conversation.

Accordingly, no particular communication was made, prior to the receipt of your Lordship's letter of the 24th instant, of the result of these conferences: but an earnest desire having been expressed by those Gentlemen in the Direction who are not Members of the Committee of Correspondence, to be informed, whether the differences of opinion, formerly known to exist, on some important points, between His Majesty's Government and the Court, were in a train of reconciliation, and the general answer which we thought ourselves bound in duty to give, not having tended to afford them the satisfaction they expected, they deemed it proper, that the sense of the Court, respecting the question of the outports, should be formally notified to your Lordship, and in consequence the unanimous resolution of the 18th was transmitted. Had the Court perceived that that proceeding admitted of the interpretation which has been put upon it by His Majesty's Government, they would assuredly have taken pains more effectually to guard against so great a misconception of the real intention, which was no other than to mark their adherence to the opinions they have uniformly entertained on the disputed question, of extending the import trade from India to the outports of this kingdom, which had formed the principal subject of discussion between the Members of His Majesty's Government and the Committee of Correspondence. It was certainly desirable for the Members of that deputed Committee, and it was thought that it might not be unacceptable to your Lordship, to know that the sentiments which they had expressed in the course of discussion, were sanctioned by the unanimous concurrence of the Body by whom they were delegated. The mode in which the resolution was adopted was conformable to the usage of the Court of Directors on solemn occasions, namely, after a report from a Committee of the whole Court, which always requires signatures, and which, in the present instance, was subscribed by every Director.

We trust, my Lord, that this explanation of the measure alluded to, will prove satisfactory to your Lordship and the other members of His Majesty's Go-

verment; and while we return our sincere acknowledgements for the attention with which our representations have been listened to, in the various interviews with which we have been honored by your Lordship and His Majesty's Ministers who attended, we hope, at the same time, to stand perfectly acquitted of any design, either to prevent or embarrass a full and deliberate discussion of the great interests at stake.

It is a matter of deep concern to us to find, that His Majesty's Ministers seem still to adhere to the principle of opening the outports of the United Kingdom to the importation of commodities from India. We have already, in our letters of the 15th and 29th April last, fully stated the dangers that must result to the Company, from so great an enlargement of the privilege in Eastern commerce to British merchants. We presume to think our objections to that enlargement have not been adequately answered; and we have to express the concern felt by the Court, that no communication has yet been made to them, of those representations which first led His Majesty's Ministers to entertain, and which induce them still to adhere to the opinion, that the public interest will be best consulted, by not confining the import trade from the East-Indies to the port of London. It would occasion much satisfaction to the Court, should such a communication have the effect of obviating their objections, even in part, to a measure, which the most imperative considerations alone could have influenced them to oppose: and were it unfortunately to fail in producing this effect, it is nevertheless desirable, that the Court of Directors shall have an opportunity of reviewing the question with all the intelligence that can be brought to bear upon it. Your Lordship has, indeed, been pleased to favor us with a brief summary of some of the arguments used by the merchants on this subject,—arguments, we must own, not in the least convincing to us: and we assure ourselves, that in advertising to them, your Lordship does not mean that the Company should be concluded, or their fate determined, by what those who oppose their interests choose

to advance; although their representations appear to have so far influenced His Majesty's Ministers, as to lead them to think, that the merchants "have a claim "to as much liberty of trade as they can enjoy, without injury to other important national interests." In those interests, we may presume, are comprehended both the consideration of the public revenue, and the maintenance of the East-India Company. But what that extent of trade is, "which can be granted with safety to those interests," is still a question undetermined. We confess that the regulations contemplated by His Majesty's Ministers, so far as your Lordship has been pleased to explain them to us, appear by no means calculated to remove our fears. The comparative interest which the Public and the Company have in preventing the smuggling of Tea, was described in our letter of the 29th April; and though it be true, as your Lordship observes, that the stake of the Public in this concern is numerically greater than that of the Company, yet the importance of the Company's inferior stake is, to them, infinitely greater, than would be to the Public the importance of the loss the revenue might sustain; because, as matters now stand, the Company have no certain dependance but the China trade, for resources essential to their subsistence. We do not the least question, that His Majesty's Ministers would be thoroughly disposed to frame additional regulations to prevent smuggling Tea, should those now in contemplation be tried, and be found insufficient. But besides that we extremely distrust the practicability of smuggling to a large extent, where the temptations would be so great, we must entreat your Lordship and His Majesty's Ministers seriously to consider, what would be the situation of the Company, if they obtained a charter upon no better terms than those now proposed, and upon trial it should be found that their commercial income failed, and that their dividend should be unprovided for or lowered:—their stock would immediately fall; their credit would be diminished; the currency of their affairs, in their payments particularly, would be impeded; general alarm and dissatisfac-

tion in all parties connected with this great establishment would be felt: and there would be a necessity for going to Parliament again, when evils great, perhaps irretrievable, would have been experienced. It is the duty of the Executive Body of the Company to carry their views forward to such contingencies, and to seek provision against them: and we must beg leave to add, that whatever rights the merchants may claim, or the nation be pleased to bestow on them, it cannot be equitable to make concessions to them which should destroy the Company, who acquired the Indian empire, and who are as much the owners of the chief seats of European trade in that empire, as they are of their freeholds in London.

With respect to the resort of Europeans to India, if we do not misunderstand the scope of your Lordship's observation, it seems to imply, that their numbers might be in proportion to the export trade from this country. If, indeed, they were to be regulated by this scale, our apprehensions would be the less; but we have no difficulty in acknowledging, that in addition to all our other arguments against admitting importations to the outports, we think that the granting of this privilege would increase the spirit of rash speculation from Great Britain and Ireland, and thereby the number of adventurers in search of fortune in India; for it is to be remembered, that those adventurers would naturally seek for new establishments, even out of the Company's territories, and there endeavour to acquire real property.

But, my Lord, this is only one of many points which require particular regulations; and, at the stage at which we are now arrived in the negotiation, we cannot but state to your Lordship, the anxious wish of the Court to be made acquainted with the whole plan which His Majesty's Government may have it in contemplation to recommend to Parliament for a Renewal of the East-India Company's Charter: including such amendments in the system of the Company's territorial government and administration, as past experience

may have indicated; the regulations deemed necessary for promoting the discipline and efficiency of the Indian Army; the amount of force which His Majesty may be empowered to maintain in India at the expense of the Company; and the provisions that may be thought requisite for settling the relative powers of the Board of Commissioners and the Court of Directors. Though these topics were specifically mentioned in the letters from Lord Melville to the Chairs, of the 30th September 1808 and the 21st March 1812, the Court are still, in great measure, uninformed of the arrangements, in regard to them, which His Majesty's Government may have in view to propose. And we entreat, also, that your Lordship will enable us to lay before the Court of Directors, and ultimately the Proprietors, in any shape that you may judge fit, the information, additional to that of the merchants already solicited, on which the determination of His Majesty's Ministers rests, as to the extension of the trade to the outports, and their intentions upon the other parts of the arrangement to which we have now adverted.

The requests we now make appear to us the more reasonable, from the weighty intimation conveyed in the concluding part of your Lordship's letter. It brings into view (to repeat an expression used in our letter of the 15th April), "*questions of the last importance to the safety of the British Empire in India, and of the British Constitution at Home.*" This is a solemn subject for the Country, as well as the Company. If, indeed, it should ever come under actual discussion, we have that confidence in the equity and wisdom of the Nation, that notwithstanding all present clamours, they will wish to do the Company justice, and to guard all the other great interests which must come into question. But prepared as we shall be, if forced into this situation, to maintain the rights and claims of our Constituents, we must yet express our hope, that the Company will not be reduced to the hard alternative, of thus having to contend for all that is dear to them, or to accept a Charter on terms

which will not enable them to execute the part hitherto assigned to them in the Indian system.

We have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient humble Servants,

(Signed) HUGH INGLIS,

ROBERT THORNTON.

The Right Honorable the Earl of  
Buckinghamshire, &c. &c. &c.

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No. XI.

*Letter from the Right Honorable the Earl of Buckinghamshire to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman noticed in the preceding Minute.*

*India Board, 4th January, 1813.*

GENTLEMEN,

I had the honor to receive your Letter of the 30th ultimo, and proceed to convey to you the sentiments of His Majesty's Government, as far as it would seem advisable, under present circumstances, to continue the discussion.

With respect to your observation, that the representations which induced His Majesty's Government to form their opinions upon the subject of the extension of the Import Trade, have been withheld from the Court of Directors, and that your objections to that extension have not been "adequately answered," you must allow me to avail myself of this occasion to apprise you, that although His Majesty's Government have shown a strong disposition to enter into the most frank and unreserved explanations with the Court of Directors, they have not felt that it was within the range of their duty to engage in a controversy upon the points at issue. That duty has been sufficiently discharged, in stating, for the information of the Court of Proprietors, the conditions upon which they were prepared to

submit a proposition to Parliament for the renewal of the Charter, accompanied by such reasons as are conveyed in the communications they have authorized me to make.

I can, however, have no difficulty in acquainting you, that the claims of the Merchants connected with the outports have not been brought before Government by written documents; that they have been urged and discussed at personal conferences with individuals, interested in their success; and that you have already been informed of the grounds upon which they were supported; but that it does not appear to His Majesty's Government, that you can be warranted in expecting that they should give a more particular account of the arguments adduced at those conferences.

I may add, however, that as the merchants and manufacturers connected with the outports, considering themselves entitled, at the expiration of the Charter of the East-India Company, to carry on that trade, from which they had been excluded for a limited time, had entered into a statement of their case, by petitions presented to Parliament in the course of the last session, you may obtain from those records that further information which you appear desirous to possess.

With regard to those points to which you have alluded, as requiring particular regulation, the Ministers of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent having signified to you, that consistently with their sense of public duty, they can submit no arrangement to Parliament, that does not include an extension of the import trade, and the Court of Directors having, with a knowledge of their opinions upon that point, by their resolution of the 18th ultimo, declined to recommend to the Court of Proprietors to agree to such an extension, it would seem premature to enter into details, until that question shall have been finally determined.

You are apprised of the disposition of His Majesty's Government to adhere to the present system of administration in India, and I am not aware that, if circumstances should admit of its continuance, it

would be necessary to propose any material alteration in the existing provisions for carrying it into execution, except such as may arise from the opening of the trade.

The confidence you express in the wisdom and justice of Parliament will, I am persuaded, not be disappointed; nor is it to be supposed, that in the consideration of this great question (to use your own words) "the safety of the British Empire in India" and the British Constitution at Home" will be overlooked, either by the Legislature or the Ministers of the Crown.

If the Government of India cannot be carried on with safety to the Constitution, except through the intervention of the Company, the propositions of the Court of Directors, whatever they may be, must unconditionally be admitted.

It will be for Parliament to determine, whether the Nation is, in this respect, without an alternative; or whether, if a change of system should be rendered necessary by the decisions of the East-India Company, measures might not be taken for opening the trade, and at the same time providing such an administration of the Government of India, as might be found compatible with the interests and security of the British Constitution.

I have the honor to be,

Gentlemen,

Your obedient and faithful humble Servant,

(Signed) BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman

of the East-India Company.

No. XII.

*Extract of a Letter from Lord Melville to the Chairman, dated 2d April, 1800.*

In the first place, I set out with disclaiming being a party to those opinions, which rest upon any

*general attack of the monopoly of the East-India Company*, either as to the *government or commerce* of India. My sentiments, in that respect, remain exactly the same as they were when I moved the renewal of the Charter, in 1793; and, if any thing, I am still more confirmed in the principles I brought forward at that time. That a direct interference by Government in the affairs of India is necessary for their stability and uniformity, I am more and more convinced; but that the ostensible form of government, with all its consequent extent and detail of patronage, must remain as it now is, I am persuaded will never be called in question by any, but those who may be disposed to sacrifice the freedom and security of our Constitution, to their own personal aggrandizement and ill-directed ambition; I remain equally satisfied, as to the propriety of *continuing a monopoly of the trade in the hands of the East-India Company*. Those who maintain the reverse, appear to me to be misled by general theories, without attending to the peculiar circumstances of the trade they are treating of. Viewing it, **EVEN** as a mere **COMMERCIAL** question, I believe this proposition to be a sound one; and if the trade were laid open, the supposed advantages thence arising are, **AT BEST**, very problematical, and would certainly be very precarious and short-lived. It is, however, totally to forget the question, to treat it as a mere commercial one. The same principles which prove the necessity of the present form and mode of Indian government, evince the necessity of the monopoly of trade. The Government and the trade are interwoven together, and we have only to recur to a very recent experience, to learn the immense advantages which have flowed from that connection of Government and trade. By the commercial capital of the Company at home, acting in connection with the public revenues under their administration abroad, they have mutually aided and administered to the wants of each other, and the result has been, the fortunate achievement of those brilliant events, upon the success of which depended the existence of the Government, the territorial wealth, and the trade of India.

*Abstract of a Letter from Lord Melville to the Chairman, dated 21st March 1801.*

I am prepared explicitly to declare, that although the first formation of an East-India Company proceeded upon purely commercial considerations, the magnitude and importance to which the East-India Company has progressively advanced, is now so interwoven with the political interests of the Empire, as to create upon my mind a firm conviction, that the maintenance of the monopoly of the East-India Company is **EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO THE POLITICAL INTERESTS** of the State, than it is to the **COMMERCIAL INTERESTS** of the Company.

No. XIII.

*Lord Castlereagh's Opinion expressed in the Debate in the House of Commons on the East-India Budget, 25th July 1806.*

It seemed, however, unjust to describe the Company's commerce as carried on at a loss. To what precise extent it might be profitable, after providing a liberal dividend to the proprietors, might be a matter of more difficult calculation, and must, like all commercial results, be in its nature fluctuating; but, in reasoning upon this branch of the Company's affairs, the worthy alderman (Mr. Prinsep) must establish several preliminary facts, before he can expect to persuade Parliament that the commercial existence of the Company is to be considered merely on grounds of mercantile profit. He must be prepared to show that individuals would be as likely to carry on steadily the commerce of India, under all the fluctuations to which such a trade is liable, where the outgoings are great, and the returns distant, as a great trading corporation. He must be prepared to dispel the apprehensions which must be entertained with respect to the injurious influence on the prosperity of India, which may be the consequence of an unsteady and unequal demand for their produce; before he can expect

to satisfy Parliament that an intercourse, perfectly unrestrained, is preferable to that qualified intercourse, partly free and partly restricted, which now prevails. If he assumes, that individuals by using an inferior description of tonnage, could carry on the trade at less expense, and consequently at greater profit, he must be prepared to shew, that this is not merely by throwing the difference of the expense on the public, by rendering numerous and expensive convoys requisite to protect their feeble vessels in time of war, whilst the Company's ships, with a comparatively slight aid from our navy, are competent to protect each other, and to set the enemy's ships of war, even when in considerable force, at defiance. He must be prepared to shew, that such an establishment as that of the Company, could be kept up without the protection of a qualified monopoly; or that such a system is in itself unnecessary to the political existence of the Company, and the management of large territorial revenues, when both in peace and in war funds must be transferred through the medium of commerce from India to Europe and from Europe to India. He must also shew, before he can establish that the interest of the manufacturer at home is interested in such a change, that individual speculators would be disposed to send out British manufactures, even at some loss, as the Company have frequently done, or that there is any other limit to the amount of this description of Export, on the part of the Company, than the utmost quantity the Indian market can take off, which they have not hitherto been able, with their most strenuous efforts and some sacrifices, to carry beyond 2,000,000 a year. These, and many other important doubts must be solved, before any satisfactory or sound conclusion can be come to, on the great practical question (Private Trade), to which the worthy alderman, somewhat out of time, had been solicitous to point the attention of the Committee.

## No. XIV.

*A a General Court of the United Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East-Indies, held on Tuesday, the 5th May, 1812.*

*Resolved unanimously,* That this Court has learnt with deep concern and surprize, that His Majesty's Ministers have been induced to change the view they first entertained of the propriety of confining to the Port of London the returns of the trade to India, now to be permitted to all British subjects. That the measure of opening the Outports to vessels of all descriptions from India, comprehending in that term the Eastern Islands, appears to this Court to be fraught with consequences ruinous to the Company, and all the long train of interests connected with it; by removing from the port of London the greater part of the Indian trade, which it has hitherto enjoyed; by rendering useless many of the expensive establishments formed there for the merchandize and shipping of that trade, and throwing out of bread many thousands of persons who now derive constant employment from it; by deranging the practice and frustrating the end of stated public sales, which are useful and important, both to the Country and the Company, who are necessarily restricted to this practice; but, above all, by affording facilities for the smuggling of teas into the ports and harbours of England, Scotland, and Ireland, to an extent unlimited, and as this Court apprehends, uncontrollable. That the consequences of this must be, the destruction of the Company's China trade, their best source of commercial profit; the failure of their dividend; the depreciation of their stock; and, unless a fund is provided from some other source for the payment of the dividend, inability on their part to continue to perform the functions assigned to them in the Government of British India. That if the constitution by which the Indian Empire is now administered should thus be subverted, the excellent system of civil and military service formed under the Company, and maintainable only by such a body, will be broken down;

the tranquillity and happiness of the vast population which that empire contains, the interests of this country in Asia, and its constitution at home, will be imminently endangered.

That the professed object for which the proposed changes are to be made, and such immense sacrifices hazarded, namely, the increase of the commerce of this kingdom, cannot be in any great degree attained, there being no practicability of extending materially the use of our manufactures among the Indian people, the tonnage allotted by the Company, or afforded by Indian ships in the management of individuals, for such exports, not having been fully occupied. Neither does it appear practicable largely to augment the importation of profitable commodities from thence; of all which the example of the American trade to the East is a proof, British Manufactures, which they could easily have procured, making no part of it, nor their returns exhibiting any new articles of importance. That therefore the trade now enjoyed by the Company and individuals will be the only certain trade to which new adventurers can have recourse. And this will be no addition to the commerce of the Country, but only a transfer from one set of hands to another: so that, old establishments will be subverted, without substituting any thing equally good in their place; and, to all appearance, with great detriment to the nation, particularly in the defalcation of a large part of the duties now collected on tea, to the amount of four millions sterling per annum; for all which defalcation, whether, one, or two, or three millions, new taxes must be laid on the people.

That the cause of the Company has been deeply injured by prejudice, ignorance, erroneous assumptions, and of late by extensive combinations, and by unfair representation, canvas, and intimidation: in all which the merits and rights of the Company, the political interests of British India, and of this country as connected with them, have been left out of sight, and the single object of the extension of commerce, an object

too only of speculation, in opposition to past experience, is the governing principle.

This Court however confidently hope, that Parliament will not decide the fate of the Company, on the representations and demands of private interests, but on just and comprehensive views of national policy; and the Court must believe that His Majesty's Ministers are too enlightened and equitable, finally to adopt any measure calculated to destroy the commercial profits of the Company, and thereby to disable them from performing their political functions. This Court therefore entirely approving, both of the firmness which their Directors have shewn in maintaining the interests of the Company, and of the manner in which they have, in the papers now produced by them, defended those interests, doth recommend it to them, to persevere in the negociation with His Majesty's Ministers upon the same principles; assured of the determination of this Court to support them to the utmost, in maintaining the permanence of the Company and the national interests which are involved in their stability.

*Resolved unanimously,* That the thanks of this Court be given to Randle Jackson, Esq. for his very luminous and excellent speech this day; for the great zeal, ability and industry he has on various occasions, and particularly on this, displayed for the honor and advantage of this Company.

*Resolved unanimously,* That the warmest thanks of this General Court be offered to the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, and Court of Directors of this Company, for their very able conduct in the negociation with Government for the renewal of the Charter; alike evincing the most luminous ideas of the best interests of this Company, and their most honorable conduct in the management of so important a concern.

The Court then on the question adjourned.

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Printed by Cox and Baylis,  
No. 75, Great Queen Street, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.

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