

Royal Gazette, and Miscellany of the Island of Saint John.

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SPEECH OF WARREN HASTINGS, ESQ.
HIGH COURT OF PARLIAMENT.
WESTMINSTER HALL.
THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 1791.

(CONCLUDED FROM OUR LAST.)

“Permit me, my Lords, to retrace the principal events in the public life of that man, WHOM THE COMMONS HAVE BROUGHT, AND HAVE SO LONG KEPT ON A TRIAL BEFORE YOU.

“With the year 1750 I entered into the service of the East India Company, and in that service have I derived all my official habits, all the knowledge which I possess, and all the principles which have regulated my conduct in it.

“In the year 1768, I was appointed a Member of the Council, and eventually to succeed to the government of Fort Saint George.

In the year 1771, when the affairs of their principal settlement were supposed to be on the decline, and to require an unusual exertion of abilities and integrity to retrieve them, the Court of Directors made choice of me for that arduous trust, and I was appointed to the government of Bengal, and to the principal direction of all the civil, military, commercial, and political affairs dependent on it.

“In the year 1774, I was appointed by an Act of Parliament Governor General of Bengal for five years; in the year 1778 I was appointed by the same authority for one, in 1779 for another, in 1781 for ten years; and in 1784 I was virtually confirmed by the Act which forms the present government for India. In this long period of thirteen years, and under so many successive appointments, I call it to the recollection of your Lordships, that while Great Britain lost one half of its empire and doubled its public debt, that government over which I presided, was not only preserved entire, but increased in population, wealth, agriculture, and commerce; and although your Lordships have been told by the House of Commons, that my measures have disgraced and degraded the British character in INDIA, yet I appeal to the united voice of India, and

the general sense of mankind, to confirm what I am now going to say, that the British Name and Character NEVER STOOD HIGHER, or were more respected in India, THAN WHEN I LEFT IT.

“So much may I say for the GENERAL effect of my government; shortly let me enumerate the SPECIFIC ACTS which contributed to produce it.

“Every division of official business, and every department of the government which now exists in Bengal, with very inconsiderable variation, ARE OF MY FORMATION.

“The establishments formed for the collection of the revenue, the institution of the courts of civil and criminal justice, the form of government established for Benares, the arrangements created for the defence and subsidy of the province of Oude, the political connections and alliances with other states, all were created by me, and subsist unchanged; or if changed, changed only (to use the words of my noble and virtuous successor, applied to the principles of my arrangements for the province of Oude) “with a view to strengthen those principles, and render them permanent.”

“Opium and salt, two great resources of revenue, were created by me. The first, which I have been impeached for not making productive enough, amounts at this time to the net annual sum of one hundred and twenty thousand pounds. The last (though when I proposed the plan, my colleagues refused to share with me in the responsibility of it, and thought I disobeyed the orders of the Company when I formed the plan) amounts to the yearly sum of eight hundred thousand pounds. To sum up all, I maintained the provinces of my immediate administration in a state of peace, plenty and security, when every other member of the British empire was involved in internal wars and civil tumult.

“In a dreadful season of famine, which visited and laid waste the neighbouring states of India during three successive years, I repressed it, in its approach to the provinces of the British dominions, and by timely regulations prevented its return; an act little known in England, because it

wanted the positive effects which alone could give it a visible communication, but proved by the grateful acknowledgments of those, who would have been the only sufferers by such a scourge; and who well remembering the effects of a former infliction of it, have made their sense of the obligations which they owed to me for this blessing, one of the first objects in many of the testimonials transmitted by the inhabitants of Bengal, Bahar, and Benares. And lastly, I raised the collective annual income of the Company's possessions from three millions to five, not by temporary and forced exactions, but by an easy, continued, and still existing production; the surest evidence of a good government, improving agriculture, and increasing population!

“To the Commons of England (here Mr. Hastings looked steadily at the Speaker,) to the Commons of England I DARE TO REPLY, that the provinces so long under my administration are, and their representatives annually tell them so, THE MOST FLOURISHING OF ALL THE STATES OF INDIA. It was I who made them so; the valour of others acquired, I enlarged and gave shape and consistency to the dominion which you hold there. I preserved it; I sent forth armies with an effectual but an economical hand, through unknown and hostile regions, to the support of your other possessions, to the retrieval of one from degradation and dishonour, and the other from utter loss and subjection. I maintained the wars WHICH WERE OF YOUR FORMATION, or that of OTHERS, NOT OF MINE; I won one Member (1) of the great India Confederacy from it by an act of seasonable retribution; with another (2) I maintained a secret intercourse, and converted him into a friend; a third (3) I drew off by diversion and negotiation, and employed him as the instrument of peace with the rest. When you cried out for peace, and your cries were heard by those who were the objects of it, I resisted this, as I did every other species of counteraction, by

(1) The Nizam. (2) Moodajee Boosla.
(3) Madajee Sindia.