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COLONIAL EXPENDITURE.

We have often looked on in astonishment as enormous sums of money, year after year, were voted by the Imperial Parliament to defray the Civil, Military and Ecclesiastical expenses of the Colonies. To pay those sums, the already over-taxed people of England, Ireland and Scotland, have toiled and moiled, sweat and groaned, and in some instances starved, that civil functionaries might be extravagantly paid,—the military men might glitter on parades and in drawing-rooms in brilliant uniforms,—that expensive and useless fortifications might be reared,—and that Christianity might be taught to wealthy Colonists, while the poor of the Mother Country were treated as if they had neither wants to be supplied in this world nor souls to be saved in the next.—Parliamentary grants for Ecclesiastical purposes, in the Colonies, are much more rare than formerly. The appropriations for civil expenditure, in some of the dependencies of the Empire, have also been considerably reduced. Not so, however, the charges connected with Naval and Military services, which have, both in the Mother Country and her Colonies, gone on steadily increasing. Various arguments and expedients have been put forward, from time to time, to reconcile the English nation to the enormous expenditure.—“Ships, Colonies and Commerce,” have long been considered the principal sources of England’s greatness. Without her Colonies, England, it has been said, would degenerate into a fourth or fifth rate power—surrounded by Colonies in every quarter of the globe and in every sea, she stands pre-eminent among the nations of the world. The English merchant conceived that Colonies were indispensable that he might enjoy a monopoly of the colony trade. Ours is a maritime power, argued others, and without colonies and the colony trade to recruit our navy, England would not be able to retain her supremacy on the seas.

Hence the army was increased to garrison distant dependencies, and ships of the line built, manned and equipped to protect the colony trade at an enormous cost to the mother country. The principal part of this expenditure might, however, have been saved, but for the erroneous views of Colonial Government, and the false views of commercial policy which prevailed up to a very recent period. It was believed that the less the colonies governed themselves and the fewer commercial privileges they enjoyed the more faithful, attached and profitable would they be to the Mother Country. Times have changed. English statesmen have discovered that if they would have the colonies governed cheaply and well, the Colonists, generally, must be allowed to manage their local affairs, and that a monopoly of the colony trade, while fatal to the interests of the colonists, brought no corresponding advantage to the mother country. With these prefatory remarks we direct the attention of our readers to the speech of Sir William Molesworth, delivered in the Commons a few days ago, on Colonial expenditure. It is almost unnecessary to add that a speech so full of information, so accurate in detail, and so well argued made a profound impression on the House, as it doubtless will do upon the Country:

“Sir W. MOLESWORTH rose to bring forward the following motion: ‘That it is the opinion of this house that the colonial expenditure of the British empire demands enquiry, with a view to its reduction: and that to accomplish this object, and to secure greater contentment and prosperity to the colonies, they ought to be invested with large powers for the administration of their local affairs.’—He maintained, and was prepared to show, that the reduction might take place without detriment to the interests of the empire, and with advantage to the government of the colonies, rendering their resources more useful and their inhabitants more attached to the British empire. In speaking of the colonies, he alluded to those only which were under the jurisdiction of the Colonial-office. They embraced an arena of between 4,000,000 and 5,000,000 of square miles, about 3,000,000 of which were divided into forty different colonies, having separate governments, and 5,000,000 of inhabitants, one of whom only were of European origin; their expenditure amounts to about £8,000,000 annually, one-half being defrayed by the colonies, and the other by Great Britain. That portion defrayed by Great Britain was under four different heads—military, naval, civil and extraordinary.—The military expenditure in 1832, was 1,700,000*l.*; in 1843, it was 2,500,000*l.*; and, at present, it could not be less, having in our colonies about 42,000 troops, for which alone we should have to vote 500,000*l.*; so that he thought he under-estimated the present military cost in saying it was only 2,500,000*l.*—They had 255 ships in commission, and taking 45 of them, with a complement of 8,000 men, as required for the colonies, the naval expense would be at least 700,000*l.*, to which must be added the cost of naval establishments and works, and freights, and expense of reliefs, raising that sum to more than 1,000,000*l.*—The civil expenditure annually voted in the miscellaneous estimates consisted of a great variety of items, and amounted to 300,000*l.*; and the extraordinary expenditure made up of such charges as for relief to sufferers, money lent to South Australia and promised to be lent to the West Indies, might at the lowest calculation be put down at 200,000*l.*; which, however, was much under the real expenditure by Great Britain on account of her colonies; while the declared value of our exports only amounted to 2,000,000*l.*, 1,000,000 of which was an ex-

port trade to Gibraltar for smuggling into Spain. So that our expenditure amounted to 9*s.* for every 1*l.* worth of goods we exported. (Hear, hear.) Now colonies ought to be useful for political or commercial objects, and with that view were sometimes employed as military stations.—But in periods of war they might prove a source of weakness, instead of strength, as they would oblige us to scatter when we ought to concentrate our forces—(hear, hear)—and in the case of a serious struggle we might be compelled to abandon them to their fate.—Passing over Gibraltar and Malta, he would ask where was the necessity of protecting the Ionian States with 2,500 troops, at a cost of 130,000*l.*, that sum being something more than the value of our exports to those states? (Hear, hear.) In 1842 they were 122,500*l.* in arrear with this country; and he doubted not that, instead of diminishing, it had since increased, while we were this year to be called upon to vote 12,000*l.* to complete the fortifications. Bermuda, another military station, expended since the peace 600,000*l.* upon military and naval works; and to complete the fortifications we must expend 260,000*l.* more. St. Helena cost us 40,000 a year. Our colonies on the coast of Africa cost 25,000*l.* a-year; while we spent at least 50,000 in vain attempts to suppress the slave trade. He could not avoid recommending the House to dispense with their military stations on the coast of Africa.”

Our readers have heard a good deal of the Kaffir War, at the Cape of Good Hope, from time to time, but very few of them had any idea of the causes, the expense, and the extraordinary results of that war. Sir William Molesworth furnishes the information, and the remedy for the waste of life and treasure in that distant and hitherto profitless Dependency:

“Then there was the Cape of Good Hope, larger in extent than the whole of the United Kingdom, rendered particularly remarkable of late by the Kaffir war—the fourth war within the last twelve years; one which formed a strange instance of the little influence exercised by the Colonial-office over a distant colony—(hear, hear)—which cost this country 1,100,000*l.*, and which would in all probability cost us 800,000 or 900,000*l.* more. When Sir Henry Pottinger came to the colony he was astonished at the proofs he found of the enormous expenditure that had been committed, of the monstrous peculation that had been perpetrated, and peculation in which there was reason to believe men of very high station had been implicated. (Hear, hear.) As an example of the reckless expenditure he would mention, that a party of colonists settled in a frontier village had been receiving rations, &c., from the government to the extent of not less than 2,000*l.* per annum, on the pretext that they served as a sort of out-post. What had the renewal of the Kaffir war been owing to? Simply to the circumstance that 20 oxen having been stolen by some natives, although immediate restitution was made of 18 of them, the governor chose to say he was not content with this restitution, but must proceed to punish the whole nation to which the robbers belonged. The war which proceeded was conducted on principles the least likely to bring it to a satisfactory issue, the troops employed being partly old peninsular soldiers, wholly unaccustomed to the sort of warfare, and partly of heavy dragoons, armed with heavy rifles, which, once discharged, they could scarcely manage to reload without dismounting, and it was not until resource was had, by the new governor, to native forces, officered by young and dashing British officers, that success was accomplished. When Sir H. Smith arrived to replace Sir H. Pottinger he found the struggle terminated, and all the new governor did was to make the native chiefs kiss his feet, and to add to our possessions some 40,000 square miles of territory, of as barren and useless lands, to use the surveyor’s phrase, as was to be found on the earth’s crust. This splendid result of a war, which originated in a removed axe and two stolen cows, had cost this country two millions of money. (Hear, hear.) As to the Colonial-office here, the probabilities were, that while the struggle was going on they knew nothing at all about it, the noble lord at the head of the department being, very possibly, more surprised than any body else when the bill of costs was presented to him.—(Hear, hear.) The war was at an end now, indeed, but the house may be sure that, unless some effectual measures interposed, a similar war would be got up again before many years had expired, for the Cape Town people admired the sort of thing vastly, in consequence of the active expenditure upon it, by which they so largely benefited. (Hear, hear.) Now his (Sir W. Molesworth’s) proposition was, to withdraw at all events the great bulk of the troops from this colony, and to leave the colonists to protect themselves, which they could very well do, the more especially, that under such circumstances, they would take good care not to provoke hostilities. (Hear, hear.) If a military station must be maintained at the Cape, 1,000 soldiers would be amply sufficient for the purpose; but he thought that emigrants would serve the colony and the mother country much better than troops. Emigrants might be conveyed to the Cape at the cost of 10*l.* per head, while every soldier kept there cost this country 60*l.* per annum, so that if the money spent upon them were laid out in emigration, the colony would receive 9,000 new inhabitants every year, who would be a far more efficient protection than the 1,500 soldiers could afford. (Hear, hear.)

“The Mauritius was to be regarded at once as a commercial colony and as a military station. There the expenditure was 225,000*l.* per annum, while the total of

our exports thither did not exceed 92,000*l.* The expenditure, in fact, was far more than he had stated, for there were to be additional troops placed on the station, and 150,000*l.* were to be expended, it appeared, on the improvement of our defences. Yet here, as at the Cape, 1,000 soldiers would answer every legitimate purpose, the colonists receiving free institutions in return for undertaking their own protection. Ceylon was neither a military station nor a commercial colony, but came rather under the class of Indian possessions. Indeed it seemed to him that it would be far better to transfer it altogether to the East India Company, and to save the cost, which at present amounted to 110,000*l.* per annum in military expenditure, besides 70,000*l.* per annum paid by the colonists; the whole of our exports thither not exceeding 240,000*l.* Upon Hong Kong this year he found that 94,519*l.* had been voted—a small sum in comparison with what this station would very soon cost. The government had begun very promisingly with the governor of this new station, who was to be paid no less a sum than 6,000*l.* per annum. (Hear, hear.) Altogether, our expenditure within the Chinese and Indian seas did not fall short of 600,000*l.* per annum, while all our exports did not exceed two millions. Another station now figured on the list, Labuan, which was to cost us in this its first year, 9,827*l.*, of which 2,000 was to go to Mr. Rajah Brooke, whose territories at Sarawak, meanwhile, were to be looked after by a consul, whom we were to remunerate with 500*l.* a year. No great length of time would elapse, under the present system of things, before Labuan would figure as largely in our estimates as the Cape of Ceylon; and we should thus have to pay ten shillings purchase money for every twenty shillings of exports that we transmitted to this colony. (Hear, hear.) Then there were the miserable Falkland Islands, which, since 1841, has cost no less than £45,000, with no return or advantage to us of any description. By all means, he would say, let this utterly useless possession be forthwith handed over to the acknowledged claims of Buenos Ayres. By reducing the troops at such military stations as it might be deemed expedient to reduce, from 21,000 to 10,000, there would be a saving effected of one million a year in military and naval expenditure alone.”

Sir W. Molesworth, although desirous of dispensing with the Military Stations on the coast of Africa—the graves alike of England’s soldiers and treasure—and such useless and expensive appendages as the Falkland Islands, would retain any Colony worth possessing. He shows conclusively, however, that the old arguments by which an extensive Colonial Empire were defended, have been met and refuted by recent changes in the commercial policy of England. It is no longer necessary, for instance, that expensive establishments should be maintained in the Colonies, that the Mother Country may enjoy a monopoly of their own trade—for the Colony trade is now as free as that of England. Why, then, it is asked, continue an expenditure, which in the British North American Colonies alone is stated at a million annually, or about thirty per cent. upon the value of the goods exported thither?

Sir William says truly, that if that million of pounds were saved, and those Colonies independent, that they would be as valuable customers, and that the exports from the Mother Country would not be diminished a single pound in consequence. And who can doubt the immense benefits that would be conferred, if the sums that are expended year after year, under the head of Military and Naval services, to the Colonies, were applied in directing a wholesome stream of Emigration, or in promoting works of public improvement?

“Then as to our colonies in N. A., the W. Indies, and Australasia, of what possible benefit was it to retain the present system there? In former years, when monopoly was in the ascendant, that principle was alleged as the ground for exercising the dominion we had assumed, for it was said this monopoly gave us the exclusive benefit of the trade with all these possessions.

But monopoly had now been struck down by the strong arm of free trade, and there remained no compulsion on our colonies to trade with us instead of with other markets. As regarded commerce, they were now virtually independent states; but, as independent states, they would still be very glad to sell us their produce, and, selling us their produce, they would receive our produce and our manufactures in payment, so long as we at all enabled them to do so. At all events no expenditure we might make in the way of military or naval armaments, would better our case; and by all means, therefore, let this expenditure be discontinued. In the year 1844 the declared value of our exports to our North American colonies, to our West Indian and Australasian colonies was six millions sterling. In the same year our expenditure upon these colonies was not less than two millions sterling, and afterwards we paid two millions a year for the chance of getting purchasers for six millions a year of exports.—(Hear, hear.) *Cut off the whole of this two millions a year expenditure, and there would not be a diminution in the demand for our exports to the extent of a single pound.* On an average of the last sixty years our North American Colonies, in one way or another, had not cost us less than a million a year, in other words, full 30 per cent on our exports thither. (Hear, hear.) On what principle did we keep 9,000 troops there? To protect our colonies from the United States? If the colonies were loyal, they would very well protect themselves: if they were not loyal, twice 9,000 troops would not at all answer the purpose. (Hear, hear.)