

EDMUND BURKE

THE WORKS OF THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
EDMUND BURKE, VOL.
10 (OF 12)

Edmund Burke
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Honourable Edmund
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The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, Vol. 10 (of 12):*

Содержание

SPEECHES IN THE IMPEACHMENT OF WARREN HASTINGS, ESQUIRE LATE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF BENGAL	4
SPEECH IN OPENING.	4
THIRD DAY: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1788	5
FOURTH DAY: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1788	109
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	121

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WARREN HASTINGS,
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GENERAL OF BENGAL

SPEECH IN OPENING.
(CONTINUED.)
FEBRUARY, 1788

SPEECH

IN

OPENING THE IMPEACHMENT

**THIRD DAY: MONDAY,
FEBRUARY 18, 1788**

My Lords,—The gentlemen who are appointed by the Commons to manage this prosecution, have directed me to inform your Lordships, that they have very carefully and attentively weighed the magnitude of the subject which they bring before you with the time which the nature and circumstances of affairs allow for their conducting it.

My Lords, on that comparison, they are very apprehensive, that, if I should go very largely into a preliminary explanation of the several matters in charge, it might be to the prejudice of an early trial of the substantial merits of each article. We have weighed and considered this maturely. We have compared exactly the time with the matter, and we have found that we

are obliged to do as all men must do who would manage their affairs practicably, to make our opinion of what might be most advantageous to the business conform to the time that is left to perform it in. We must, as all men must, submit affairs to time, and not think of making time conform to our wishes; and therefore, my Lords, I very willingly fall in with the inclinations of the gentlemen with whom I have the honor to act, to come as soon as possible to close fighting, and to grapple immediately and directly with the corruptions of India,—to bring before your Lordships the direct articles, to apply the evidence to the articles, and to bring the matter forward for your Lordships' decision in that manner which the confidence we have in the justice of our cause demands from the Commons of Great Britain.

My Lords, these are the opinions of those with whom I have the honor to act, and in their opinions I readily acquiesce. For I am far from wishing to waste any of your Lordships' time upon any matter merely through any opinion I have of the nature of the business, when at the same time I find that in the opinion of others it might militate against the production of its full, proper, and (if I may so say) its immediate effect.

It was my design to class the crimes of the late Governor of Bengal,—to show their mutual bearings,—how they were mutually aided and grew and were formed out of each other. I proposed first of all to show your Lordships that they have their root in that which is the origin of all evil, avarice and rapacity,—to show how that led to prodigality of the public

money,—and how prodigality of the public money, by wasting the treasures of the East India Company, furnished an excuse to the Governor-General to break its faith, to violate all its most solemn engagements, and to fall with a hand of stern, ferocious, and unrelenting rapacity upon all the allies and dependencies of the Company. But I shall be obliged in some measure to abridge this plan; and as your Lordships already possess, from what I had the honor to state on Saturday, a general view of this matter, you will be in a condition to pursue it when the several articles are presented.

My Lords, I have to state to-day the root of all these misdemeanors,—namely, the pecuniary corruption and avarice which gave rise and primary motion to all the rest of the delinquencies charged to be committed by the Governor-General.

My Lords, pecuniary corruption forms not only, as your Lordships will observe in the charges before you, an article of charge by itself, but likewise so intermixes with the whole, that it is necessary to give, in the best manner I am able, a history of that corrupt system which brought on all the subsequent acts of corruption. I will venture to say there is no one act, in which tyranny, malice, cruelty, and oppression can be charged, that does not at the same time carry evident marks of pecuniary corruption.

I stated to your Lordships on Saturday last the principles upon which Mr. Hastings governed his conduct in India, and upon

which he grounds his defence. These may all be reduced to one short word,—*arbitrary power*. My Lords, if Mr. Hastings had contended, as other men have often done, that the system of government which he patronizes, and on which he acted, was a system tending on the whole to the blessing and benefit of mankind, possibly something might be said for him for setting up so wild, absurd, irrational, and wicked a system,—something might be said to qualify the act from the intention; but it is singular in this man, that, at the time he tells you he acted on the principles of arbitrary power, he takes care to inform you that he was not blind to the consequences. Mr. Hastings foresaw that the consequences of this system was corruption. An arbitrary system, indeed, must always be a corrupt one. My Lords, there never was a man who thought he had no law but his own will, who did not soon find that he had no end but his own profit. Corruption and arbitrary power are of natural unequivocal generation, necessarily producing one another. Mr. Hastings foresees the abusive and corrupt consequences, and then he justifies his conduct upon the necessities of that system. These are things which are new in the world; for there never was a man, I believe, who contended for arbitrary power, (and there have been persons wicked and foolish enough to contend for it,) that did not pretend, either that the system was good in itself, or that by their conduct they had mitigated or had purified it, and that the poison, by passing through their constitution, had acquired salutary properties. But if you look at his defence before

the House of Commons, you will see that that very system upon which he governed, and under which he now justifies his actions, did appear to himself a system pregnant with a thousand evils and a thousand mischiefs.

The next thing that is remarkable and singular in the principles upon which the Governor-General acted is, that, when he is engaged in a vicious system which clearly leads to evil consequences, he thinks himself bound to realize all the evil consequences involved in that system. All other men have taken a directly contrary course: they have said, "I have been engaged in an evil system, that led, indeed, to mischievous consequences, but I have taken care, by my own virtues, to prevent the evils of the system under which I acted."

We say, then, not only that he governed arbitrarily, but corruptly,—that is to say, that he was a giver and receiver of bribes, and formed a system for the purpose of giving and receiving them. We wish your Lordships distinctly to consider that he did not only give and receive bribes accidentally, as it happened, without any system and design, merely as the opportunity or momentary temptation of profit urged him to it, but that he has formed plans and systems of government for the very purpose of accumulating bribes and presents to himself. This system of Mr. Hastings's government is such a one, I believe, as the British nation in particular will disown; for I will venture to say, that, if there is any one thing which distinguishes this nation eminently above another, it is, that in its offices at home,

both judicial and in the state, there is less suspicion of pecuniary corruption attaching to them than to any similar offices in any part of the globe, or that have existed at any time: so that he who would set up a system of corruption, and attempt to justify it upon the principle of utility, that man is staining not only the nature and character of office, but that which is the peculiar glory of the official and judicial character of this country; and therefore, in this House, which is eminently the guardian of the purity of all the offices of this kingdom, he ought to be called eminently and peculiarly to account. There are many things, undoubtedly, in crimes, which make them frightful and odious; but bribery, filthy hands, a chief governor of a great empire receiving bribes from poor, miserable, indigent people, this is what makes government itself base, contemptible, and odious in the eyes of mankind.

My Lords, it is certain that even tyranny itself may find some specious color, and appear as a more severe and rigid execution of justice. Religious persecution may shield itself under the guise of a mistaken and over-zealous piety. Conquest may cover its baldness with its own laurels, and the ambition of the conqueror may be hid in the secrets of his own heart under a veil of benevolence, and make him imagine he is bringing temporary desolation upon a country only to promote its ultimate advantage and his own glory. But in the principles of that governor who makes nothing but money his object there can be nothing of this. There are here none of those specious delusions that look like virtues, to veil either the governed or the governor. If you look

at Mr. Hastings's merits, as he calls them, what are they? Did he improve the internal state of the government by great reforms? No such thing. Or by a wise and incorrupt administration of justice? No. Has he enlarged the boundary of our government? No: there are but too strong proofs of his lessening it. But his pretensions to merit are, that he squeezed more money out of the inhabitants of the country than other persons could have done,—money got by oppression, violence, extortion from the poor, or the heavy hand of power upon the rich and great.

These are his merits. What we charge as his demerits are all of the same nature; for, though there is undoubtedly oppression, breach of faith, cruelty, perfidy, charged upon him, yet the great ruling principle of the whole, and that from which you can never have an act free, is money,—it is the vice of base avarice, which never is, nor ever appears even to the prejudices of mankind to be, anything like a virtue. Our desire of acquiring sovereignty in India undoubtedly originated first in ideas of safety and necessity; its next step was a step of ambition. That ambition, as generally happens in conquest, was followed by gains of money; but afterwards there was no mixture at all; it was, during Mr. Hastings's time, altogether a business of money. If he has extirpated a nation, I will not say whether properly or improperly, it is because (says he) you have all the benefit of conquest without expense; you have got a large sum of money from the people, and you may leave them to be governed by whom and as they will. This is directly contrary to the principles

of conquerors. If he has at any time taken any money from the dependencies of the Company, he does not pretend that it was obtained from their zeal and affection to our cause, or that it made their submission more complete: very far from it. He says they ought to be independent, and all that you have to do is to squeeze money from them. In short, money is the beginning, the middle, and the end of every kind of act done by Mr. Hastings: pretendedly for the Company, but really for himself.

Having said so much about the origin, the first principle, both of that which he makes his merit and which we charge as his demerit, the next step is, that I should lay open to your Lordships, as clearly as I can, what the sense of his employers, the East India Company, and what the sense of the legislature itself, has been upon those merits and demerits of money.

My Lords, the Company, knowing that these money transactions were likely to subvert that empire which was first established upon them, did, in the year 1765, send out a body of the strongest and most solemn covenants to their servants, that they should take no presents from the country powers, under any name or description, except those things which were publicly and openly taken for the use of the Company,—namely, *territories* or *sums of money* which might be obtained by treaty. They distinguished such presents as were taken from any persons privately, and unknown to them, and without their authority, from subsidies: and that this is the true nature and construction of their order I shall contend and explain afterwards to your

Lordships. They have said, nothing shall be taken for their private use; for though in that and in every state there may be subsidiary treaties by which sums of money may be received, yet they forbid their servants, their governors, whatever application they might pretend to make of them, to receive, under any other name or pretence, more than a certain, marked, simple sum of money, and this not without the consent and permission of the Presidency to which they belong. This is the substance, the principle, and the spirit of the covenants, and will show your Lordships how radicated an evil this of bribery and presents was judged to be.

When these covenants arrived in India, the servants refused at first to execute them,—and suspended the execution of them, till they had enriched themselves with presents. Eleven months elapsed, and it was not till Lord Clive reached the place of his destination that the covenants were executed: and they were not executed then without some degree of force. Soon afterwards the treaty was made with the country powers by which Sujah ul Dowlah was reëstablished in the province of Oude, and paid a sum of 500,000*l.* to the Company for it. It was a public payment, and there was not a suspicion that a single shilling of private emolument attended it. But whether Mr. Hastings had the example of others or not, their example could not justify his briberies. He was sent there to put an end to all those examples. The Company did expressly vest him with that power. They declared at that time, that the whole of their service was totally corrupted by bribes and presents, and by extravagance

and luxury, which partly gave rise to them, and these, in their turn, enabled them to pursue those excesses. They not only reposed trust in the integrity of Mr. Hastings, but reposed trust in his remarkable frugality and order in his affairs, which they considered as things that distinguished his character. But in his defence we have him quite in another character,—no longer the frugal, attentive servant, bred to business, bred to book-keeping, as all the Company's servants are; he now knows nothing of his own affairs, knows not whether he is rich or poor, knows not what he has in the world. Nay, people are brought forward to say that they know better than he does what his affairs are. He is not like a careful man bred in a counting-house, and by the Directors put into an office of the highest trust on account of the regularity of his affairs; he is like one buried in the contemplation of the stars, and knows nothing of the things in this world. It was, then, on account of an idea of his great integrity that the Company put him into this situation. Since that he has thought proper to justify himself, not by clearing himself of receiving bribes, but by saying that no bad consequences resulted from it, and that, if any such evil consequences did arise from it, they arose rather from his inattention to money than from his desire of acquiring it.

I have stated to your Lordships the nature of the covenants which the East India Company sent out. Afterwards, when they found their servants had refused to execute these covenants, they not only very severely reprehended even a moment's delay in their execution, and threatened the exacting the most strict

and rigorous performance of them, but they sent a commission to enforce the observance of them more strongly; and that commission had it specially in charge never to receive presents. They never sent out a person to India without recognizing the grievance, and without ordering that presents should not be received, as the main fundamental part of their duty, and upon which all the rest depended, as it certainly must: for persons at the head of government should not encourage that by example which they ought by precept, authority, and force to restrain in all below them. That commission failing, another commission was preparing to be sent out with the same instructions, when an act of Parliament took it up; and that act, which gave Mr. Hastings power, did mould in the very first stamina of his power this principle, in words the most clear and forcible that an act of Parliament could possibly devise upon the subject. And that act was made not only upon a general knowledge of the grievance, but your Lordships will see in the reports of that time that Parliament had directly in view before them the whole of that monstrous head of corruption under the name of presents, and all the monstrous consequences that followed it.

Now, my Lords, every office of trust, in its very nature, forbids the receipt of bribes. But Mr. Hastings was forbidden it, first, by his official situation,—next, by covenant,—and lastly, by act of Parliament: that is to say, by all the things that bind mankind, or that can bind them,—first, moral obligation inherent in the duty of their office,—next, the positive injunctions of

the legislature of the country,—and lastly, a man's own private, particular, voluntary act and covenant. These three, the great and only obligations that bind mankind, all united in the focus of this single point,—that they should take no presents.

I am to mark to your Lordships, that this law and this covenant did consider indirect ways of taking presents—taking them by others, and such like—directly in the very same light as they considered taking them by themselves. It is perhaps a much more dangerous way; because it adds to the crime a false, prevaricating mode of concealing it, and makes it much more mischievous by admitting others into the participation of it. Mr. Hastings has said, (and it is one of the general complaints of Mr. Hastings,) that he is made answerable for the acts of other men. It is a thing inherent in the nature of his situation. All those who enjoy a great superintending trust, which is to regulate the whole affairs of an empire, are responsible for the acts and conduct of other men, so far as they had anything to do with appointing them, or holding them in their places, or having any sort of inspection into their conduct. But when a Governor presumes to remove from their situations those persons whom the public authority and sanction of the Company have appointed, and obtrudes upon them by violence other persons, superseding the orders of his masters, he becomes doubly responsible for their conduct. If the persons he names should be of notorious evil character and evil principles, and if this should be perfectly known to himself, and of public notoriety to the rest of the world, then another strong

responsibility attaches on him for the acts of those persons.

Governors, we know very well, cannot with their own hands be continually receiving bribes,—for then they must have as many hands as one of the idols in an Indian temple, in order to receive all the bribes which a Governor-General may receive,—but they have them vicariously. As there are many offices, so he has had various officers for receiving and distributing his bribes; he has a great many, some white and some black agents. The white men are loose and licentious; they are apt to have resentments, and to be bold in revenging them. The black men are very secret and mysterious; they are not apt to have very quick resentments, they have not the same liberty and boldness of language which characterize Europeans; and they have fears, too, for themselves, which makes it more likely that they will conceal anything committed to them by Europeans. Therefore Mr. Hastings had his black agents, not one, two, three, but many, disseminated through the country: no two of them, hardly, appear to be in the secret of any one bribe. He has had likewise his white agents,—they were necessary,—a Mr. Larkins and a Mr. Croftes. Mr. Croftes was sub-treasurer, and Mr. Larkins accountant-general. These were the last persons of all others that should have had anything to do with bribes; yet these were some of his agents in bribery. There are few instances, in comparison of the whole number of bribes, but there are some, where two men are in the secret of the same bribe. Nay, it appears that there was one bribe divided into different payments at different times,

—that one part was committed to one black secretary, another part to another black secretary. So that it is almost impossible to make up a complete body of all his bribery: you may find the scattered limbs, some here and others there; and while you are employed in picking them up, he may escape entirely in a prosecution for the whole.

The first act of his government in Bengal was the most bold and extraordinary that I believe ever entered into the head of any man,—I will say, of any tyrant. It was no more or less than a general, almost exceptless confiscation, in time of profound peace, of all the landed property in Bengal, upon most extraordinary pretences. Strange as this may appear, he did so confiscate it; he put it up to a pretended public, in reality to a private corrupt auction; and such favored landholders as came to it were obliged to consider themselves as not any longer proprietors of the estates, but to recognize themselves as farmers under government: and even those few that were permitted to remain on their estates had their payments raised at his arbitrary discretion; and the rest of the lands were given to farmers-general, appointed by him and his committee, at a price fixed by the same arbitrary discretion.

It is necessary to inform your Lordships that the revenues of Bengal are, for the most part, territorial revenues, great quit-rents issuing out of lands. I shall say nothing either of the nature of this property, of the rights of the people to it, or of the mode of exacting the rents, till that great question of revenues, one of the

greatest which we shall have to lay before you, shall be brought before your Lordships particularly and specially as an article of charge. I only mention it now as an exemplification of the great principle of corruption which guided Mr. Hastings's conduct.

When the ancient nobility, the great princes, (for such I may call them,) a nobility, perhaps, as ancient as that of your Lordships, (and a more truly noble body never existed in that character,)—my Lords, when all the nobility, some of whom have borne the rank and port of princes, all the gentry, all the freeholders of the country, had their estates in that manner confiscated,—that is, either given to themselves to hold on the footing of farmers, or totally confiscated,—when such an act of tyranny was done, no doubt some good was pretended. This confiscation was made by Mr. Hastings, and the lands let to these farmers for five years, upon an idea which always accompanies his acts of oppression, the idea of *moneyed merit*. He adopted this mode of confiscating the estates, and letting them to farmers, for the avowed purpose of seeing how much it was possible to take out of them. Accordingly, he set them up to this wild and wicked auction, as it would have been, if it had been a real one,—corrupt and treacherous, as it was,—he set these lands up for the purpose of making that discovery, and pretended that the discovery would yield a most amazing increase of rent. And for some time it appeared so to do, till it came to the touchstone of experience; and then it was found that there was a defalcation from these monstrous raised revenues which were to cancel in the

minds of the Directors the wickedness of so atrocious, flagitious, and horrid an act of treachery. At the end of five years what do you think was the failure? No less than 2,050,000*l*. Then a new source of corruption was opened,—that is, how to deal with the balances: for every man who had engaged in these transactions was a debtor to government, and the remission of that debt depended upon the discretion of the Governor-General. Then the persons who were to settle the composition of that immense debt, who were to see how much was recoverable and how much not, were able to favor, or to exact to the last shilling; and there never existed a doubt but that not only upon the original cruel exaction, but upon the remission afterwards, immense gains were derived. This will account for the manner in which those stupendous fortunes which astonish the world have been made. They have been made, first by a tyrannous exaction from the people who were suffered to remain in possession of their own land as farmers,—then by selling the rest to farmers at rents and under hopes which could never be realized, and then getting money for the relaxation of their debts. But whatever excuse, and however wicked, there might have been for this wicked act, namely, that it carried upon the face of it some sort of appearance of public good,—that is to say, that sort of public good which Mr. Hastings so often professed, of ruining the country for the benefit of the Company,—yet, in fact, this business of balances is that *nidus* in which have been nustled and bred and born all the corruptions of India, first by making extravagant demands,

and afterwards by making corrupt relaxations of them.

Besides this monstrous failure, in consequence of a miserable exaction by which more was attempted to be forced from the country than it was capable of yielding, and this by way of experiment, when your Lordships come to inquire who the farmers-general of the revenue were, you would naturally expect to find them to be the men in the several countries who had the most interest, the greatest wealth, the best knowledge of the revenue and resources of the country in which they lived. Those would be thought the natural, proper farmers-general of each district. No such thing, my Lords. They are found in the body of people whom I have mentioned to your Lordships. They were almost all let to Calcutta banians. Calcutta banians were the farmers of almost the whole. They sub-delegated to others, who sometimes had sub-delegates under them *ad infinitum*. The whole formed a system together, through the succession of black tyrants scattered through the country, in which you at last find the European at the end, sometimes indeed not hid very deep, not above one between him and the farmer, namely, his banian directly, or some other black person to represent him. But some have so managed the affair, that, when you inquire who the farmer is,—Was such a one farmer? No. Cantoo Baboo? No. Another? No,—at last you find three deep of fictitious farmers, and you find the European gentlemen, high in place and authority, the real farmers of the settlement. So that the zemindars were dispossessed, the country racked and ruined, for

the benefit of an European, under the name of a farmer: for you will easily judge whether these gentlemen had fallen so deeply in love with the banians, and thought so highly of their merits and services, as to reward *them* with all the possessions of the great landed interest of the country. Your Lordships are too grave, wise, and discerning, to make it necessary for me to say more upon that subject. Tell me that the banians of English gentlemen, dependants on them at Calcutta, were the farmers throughout, and I believe I need not tell your Lordships for whose benefit they were farmers.

But there is one of these who comes so nearly, indeed so precisely, within this observation, that it is impossible for me to pass him by. Whoever has heard of Mr. Hastings's name, with any knowledge of Indian connections, has heard of his banian, Cantoo Baboo. This man is well known in the records of the Company, as his agent for receiving secret gifts, confiscations, and presents. You would have imagined that he would at least have kept *him* out of these farms, in order to give the measure a color at least of disinterestedness, and to show that this whole system of corruption and pecuniary oppression was carried on for the benefit of the Company. The Governor-General and Council made an ostensible order by which no collector, or person concerned in the revenue, should have any connection with these farms. This order did not include the Governor-General in the words of it, but more than included him in the spirit of it; because his power to protect a farmer-general

in the person of his own servant was infinitely greater than that of any subordinate person. Mr. Hastings, in breach of this order, gave farms to his own banian. You find him the farmer of great, of vast and extensive farms. Another regulation that was made on that occasion was, that no farmer should have, except in particular cases, which were marked, described, and accurately distinguished, a greater farm than what paid 10,000*l.* a year to government. Mr. Hastings, who had broken the first regulation by giving any farm at all to his banian, finding himself bolder, broke the second too, and, instead of 10,000*l.*, gave him farms paying a revenue of 130,000*l.* a year to government. Men undoubtedly have been known to be under the dominion of their domestics; such things have happened to great men: they never have happened justifiably in my opinion. They have never happened excusably; but we are acquainted sufficiently with the weakness of human nature to know that a domestic who has served you in a near office long, and in your opinion faithfully, does become a kind of relation; it brings on a great affection and regard for his interest. Now was this the case with Mr. Hastings and Cantoo Baboo? Mr. Hastings was just arrived at his government, and Cantoo Baboo had been but a year in his service; so that he could not in that time have contracted any great degree of friendship for him. These people do not live in your house; the Hindoo servants never sleep in it; they cannot eat with your servants; they have no second table, in which they can be continually about you, to be domesticated

with yourself, a part of your being, as people's servants are to a certain degree. These persons live all abroad; they come at stated hours upon matters of business, and nothing more. But if it had been otherwise, Mr. Hastings's connection with Cantoo Baboo had been but of a year's standing; he had before served in that capacity Mr. Sykes, who recommended him to Mr. Hastings. Your Lordships, then, are to judge whether such outrageous violations of all the principles by which Mr. Hastings pretended to be guided in the settlement of these farms were for the benefit of this old, decayed, affectionate servant of one year's standing: your Lordships will judge of that.

I have here spoken only of the beginning of a great, notorious system of corruption, which branched out so many ways and into such a variety of abuses, and has afflicted that kingdom with such horrible evils from that day to this, that I will venture to say it will make one of the greatest, weightiest, and most material parts of the charge that is now before you; as I believe I need not tell your Lordships that an attempt to set up the whole landed interest of a kingdom to auction must be attended, not only in that act, but every consequential act, with most grievous and terrible consequences.

My Lords, I will now come to a scene of peculation of another kind: namely, a peculation by the direct sale of offices of justice,—by the direct sale of the successions of families,—by the sale of guardianships and trusts, held most sacred among the people of India: by the sale of them, not, as before, to farmers, not,

as you might imagine, to near relations of the families, but a sale of them to the unfaithful servants of those families, their own perfidious servants, who had ruined their estates, who, if any balances had accrued to the government, had been the cause of those debts. Those very servants were put in power over their estates, their persons, and their families, by Mr. Hastings, for a shameful price. It will be proved to your Lordships, in the course of this business, that Mr. Hastings has done this in another sacred trust, the most sacred trust a man can have,—that is, in the case of those *vakeels*, (as they call them,) agents, or attorneys, who had been sent to assert and support the rights of their miserable masters before the Council-General. It will be proved that these vakeels were by Mr. Hastings, for a price to be paid for it, put in possession of the very power, situation, and estates of those masters who sent them to Calcutta to defend them from wrong and violence. The selling offices of justice, the sale of succession in families, of guardianships and other sacred trusts, the selling masters to their servants, and principals to the attorneys they employed to defend themselves, were all parts of the same system; and these were the horrid ways in which he received bribes beyond any common rate.

When Mr. Hastings was appointed in the year 1773 to be Governor-General of Bengal, together with Mr. Barwell, General Clavering, Colonel Monson, and Mr. Francis, the Company, knowing the former corrupt state of their service, (but the whole corrupt system of Mr. Hastings at that time not being known

or even suspected at home,) did order them, in discharge of the spirit of the act of Parliament, to make an inquiry into all manner of corruptions and malversations in office, without the exception of any persons whatever. Your Lordships are to know that the act did expressly authorize the Court of Directors to frame a body of instructions, and to give orders to their new servants appointed under the act of Parliament, lest it should be supposed that they, by their appointment under the act, could supersede the authority of the Directors. The Directors, sensible of the power left in them over their servants by the act of Parliament, though their nomination was taken from them, did, agreeably to the spirit and power of that act, give this order.

The Council consisted of two parties: Mr. Hastings and Mr. Barwell, who were chosen and kept there upon the idea of their local knowledge; and the other three, who were appointed on account of their great parts and known integrity. And I will venture to say that those three gentlemen did so execute their duty in India, in all the substantial parts of it, that they will serve as a shield to cover the honor of England, whenever this country is upbraided in India.

They found a rumor running through the country of great peculations and oppressions. Soon after, when it was known what their instructions were, and that the Council was ready, as is the first duty of all governors, even when there is no express order, to receive complaints against the oppressions and corruptions of government in any part of it, they found such a body (and that

body shall be produced to your Lordships) of corruption and speculation in every walk, in every department, in every situation of life, in the sale of the most sacred trusts, and in the destruction of the most ancient families of the country, as I believe in so short a time never was unveiled since the world began.

Your Lordships would imagine that Mr. Hastings would at least ostensibly have taken some part in endeavoring to bring these corruptions before the public, or that he would at least have acted with some little management in his opposition. But, alas! it was not in his power; there was not one, I think, but I am sure very few, of these general articles of corruption, in which the most eminent figure in the crowd, the principal figure as it were in the piece, was not Mr. Hastings himself. There were a great many others involved; for all departments were corrupted and vitiated. But you could not open a page in which you did not see Mr. Hastings, or in which you did not see Cantoo Baboo. Either the black or white side of Mr. Hastings constantly was visible to the world in every part of these transactions.

With the other gentlemen, who were visible too, I have at present no dealing. Mr. Hastings, instead of using any management on that occasion, instantly set up his power and authority, directly against the majority of the Council, directly against his colleagues, directly against the authority of the East India Company and the authority of the act of Parliament, to put a dead stop to all these inquiries. He broke up the Council, the moment they attempted to perform this part of their duty.

As the evidence multiplied upon him, the daring exertions of his power in stopping all inquiries increased continually. But he gave a credit and authority to the evidence by these attempts to suppress it.

Your Lordships have heard that among the body of the accusers of this corruption there was a principal man in the country, a man of the first rank and authority in it, called Nundcomar, who had the management of revenues amounting to 150,000*l.* a year, and who had, if really inclined to play the small game with which he has been charged by his accusers, abundant means to gratify himself in playing great ones; but Mr. Hastings has himself given him, upon the records of the Company, a character which would at least justify the Council in making some inquiry into charges made by him.

First, he was perfectly competent to make them, because he was in the management of those affairs from which Mr. Hastings is supposed to have received corrupt emolument. He and his son were the chief managers in those transactions. He was therefore perfectly competent to it.—Mr. Hastings has cleared his character; for though it is true, in the contradictions in which Mr. Hastings has entangled himself, he has abused and insulted him, and particularly after his appearance as an accuser, yet before this he has given this testimony of him, that the hatred that had been drawn upon him, and the general obloquy of the English nation, was on account of his attachment to his own prince and the liberties of his country. Be he what he might, I

am not disposed, nor have I the least occasion, to defend either his conduct or his memory.

It is to no purpose for Mr. Hastings to spend time in idle objections to the character of Nundcomar. Let him be as bad as Mr. Hastings represents him. I suppose he was a caballing, bribing, intriguing politician, like others in that country, both black and white. We know associates in dark and evil actions are not generally the best of men; but be that as it will, it generally happens that they are the best of all discoverers. If Mr. Hastings were the accuser of Nundcomar, I should think the presumptions equally strong against Nundcomar, if he had acted as Mr. Hastings has acted.—He was not only competent, but the most competent of all men to be Mr. Hastings's accuser. But Mr. Hastings has himself established both his character and his competency by employing him against Mahomed Reza Khân. He shall not blow hot and cold. In what respect was Mr. Hastings better than Mahomed Reza Khân, that the whole rule, principle, and system of accusation and inquiry should be totally reversed in general, nay, reversed in the particular instance, the moment he became accuser against Mr. Hastings?—Such was the accuser. He was the man that gave the bribes, and, in addition to his own evidence, offers proof by other witnesses.

What was the accusation? Was the accusation improbable, either on account of the subject-matter or the actor in it? Does such an appointment as that of Munny Begum, in the most barefaced evasion of his orders, appear to your Lordships a

matter that contains no just presumptions of guilt, so that, when a charge of bribery comes upon it, you are prepared to reject it, as if the action were so clear and proper that no man could attribute it to an improper motive? And as to the man,—is Mr. Hastings a man against whom a charge of bribery is improbable? Why, he owns it. He is a professor of it. He reduces it into scheme and system. He glories in it. He turns it to merit, and declares it is the best way of supplying the exigencies of the Company. Why, therefore, should it be held improbable?—But I cannot mention this proceeding without shame and horror.

My Lords, when this man appeared as an accuser of Mr. Hastings, if he was a man of bad character, it was a great advantage to Mr. Hastings to be accused by a man of that description. There was no likelihood of any great credit being given to him.

This person, who, in one of those sales of which I have already given you some account in the history of the last period of the revolutions of Bengal, had been, or thought he had been, cheated of his money, had made some discoveries, and been guilty of that great irremissible sin in India, the disclosure of peculation. He afterwards came with a second disclosure, and was likely to have odium enough upon the occasion. He directly charged Mr. Hastings with the receipt of bribes, amounting together to about 40,000*l.* sterling, given by himself, on his own account and that of Munny Begum. The charge was accompanied with every particular which could facilitate proof or detection,—time,

place, persons, species, to whom paid, by whom received. Here was a fair opportunity for Mr. Hastings at once to defeat the malice of his enemies and to clear his character to the world. His course was different. He railed much at the accuser, but did not attempt to refute the accusation. He refuses to permit the inquiry to go on, attempts to dissolve the Council, commands his banian not to attend. The Council, however, goes on, examines to the bottom, and resolves that the charge was proved, and that the money ought to go to the Company. Mr. Hastings then broke up the Council,—I will not say whether legally or illegally. The Company's law counsel thought he might legally do it; but he corruptly did it, and left mankind no room to judge but that it was done for the screening of his own guilt: for a man may use a legal power corruptly, and for the most shameful and detestable purposes. And thus matters continued, till he commenced a criminal prosecution against this man,—this man whom he dared not meet as a defendant.

Mr. Hastings, instead of answering the charge, attacks the accuser. Instead of meeting the man in front, he endeavored to go round, to come upon his flanks and rear, but never to meet him in the face, upon the ground of his accusation, as he was bound by the express authority of law and the express injunctions of the Directors to do. If the bribery is not admitted on the evidence of Nundcomar, yet his suppressing it is a crime, a violation of the orders of the Court of Directors. He disobeyed those instructions; and if it be only for disobedience, for rebellion

against his masters, (putting the corrupt motive out of the question,) I charge him for this disobedience, and especially on account of the principles upon which he proceeded in it.

Then he took another step: he accused Nundcomar of a conspiracy,—which was a way he then and ever since has used, whenever means were taken to detect any of his own iniquities.

And here it becomes necessary to mention another circumstance of history: that the legislature, not trusting entirely to the Governor-General and Council, had sent out a court of justice to be a counter security against these corruptions, and to detect and punish any such misdemeanors as might appear. And this court I take for granted has done great services.

Mr. Hastings flew to this court, which was meant to protect in their situations informers against bribery and corruption, rather than to protect the accused from any of the preliminary methods which must indispensably be used for the purpose of detecting their guilt,—he flew to this court, charging this Nundcomar and others with being conspirators.

A man might be convicted as a conspirator, and yet afterwards live; he might put the matter into other hands, and go on with his information; nothing less than *stone-dead* would do the business. And here happened an odd concurrence of circumstances. Long before Nundcomar preferred his charge, he knew that Mr. Hastings was plotting his ruin, and that for this purpose he had used a man whom he, Nundcomar, had turned out of doors, called Mohun Persaud. Mr. Hastings had seen papers put

upon the board, charging him with this previous plot for the destruction of Nundcomar; and this identical person, Mohun Persaud, whom Nundcomar had charged as Mr. Hastings's associate in plotting his ruin, was now again brought forward as the principal evidence against him. I will not enter (God forbid I should!) into the particulars of the subsequent trial of Nundcomar; but you will find the marks and characters of it to be these. You will find a close connection between Mr. Hastings and the chief-justice, which we shall prove. We shall prove that one of the witnesses who appeared there was a person who had been before, or has since been, concerned with Mr. Hastings in his most iniquitous transactions. You will find, what is very odd, that in this trial for forgery with which this man stood charged, forgery in a private transaction, all the persons who were witnesses or parties to it had been, before or since, the particular friends of Mr. Hastings,—in short, persons from that rabble with whom Mr. Hastings was concerned, both before and since, in various transactions and negotiations of the most criminal kind. But the law took its course. I have nothing more to say than that the man is gone,—hanged justly, if you please; and that it did so happen,—luckily for Mr. Hastings,—it so happened, that the relief of Mr. Hastings, and the justice of the court, and the resolution never to relax its rigor, did all concur just at a happy nick of time and moment; and Mr. Hastings, accordingly, had the full benefit of them all.

His accuser was supposed to be what men may be, and yet

very competent for accusers, namely, one of his accomplices in guilty actions,—one of those persons who may have a great deal to say of bribes. All that I contend for is, that he was in the closest intimacy with Mr. Hastings, was in a situation for giving bribes,—and that Mr. Hastings was proved afterwards to have received a sum of money from him, which may be well referred to bribes.

This example had its use in the way in which it was intended to operate, and in which alone it could operate. It did not discourage forgeries: they went on at their usual rate, neither more nor less: but it put an end to all accusations against all persons in power for any corrupt practice. Mr. Hastings observes, that no man in India complains of him. It is generally true. The voice of all India is stopped. All complaint was strangled with the same cord that strangled Nundcomar. This murdered not only that accuser, but all future accusation; and not only defeated, but totally vitiated and reversed all the ends for which this country, to its eternal and indelible dishonor, had sent out a pompous embassy of justice to the remotest parts of the globe.

But though Nundcomar was put out of the way by the means by which *he* was removed, a part of the charge was not strangled with him. Whilst the process against Nundcomar was carrying on before Sir Elijah Impey, the process was continuing against Mr. Hastings in other modes; the receipt of a part of those bribes from Munny Begum, to the amount of 15,000*l.*, was proved against him, and that a sum to the same amount was to be paid to his associate, Mr. Middleton. As it was proved at Calcutta, so

it will be proved at your Lordships' bar to your entire satisfaction by records and living testimony now in England. It was, indeed, obliquely admitted by Mr. Hastings himself.

The excuse for this bribe, fabricated by Mr. Hastings, and taught to Munny Begum, when he found that she was obliged to prove it against him, was, that it was given to him for his entertainment, according to some pretended custom, at the rate of 200*l.* sterling a day, whilst he remained at Moorshedabad. My Lords, this leads me to a few reflections on the apology or defence of this bribe. We shall certainly, I hope, render it clear to your Lordships that it was not paid in this manner as a daily allowance, but given in a gross sum. But take it in his own way, it was no less illegal, and no less contrary to his covenant; but if true under the circumstances, it was an horrible aggravation of his crime. The first thing that strikes is, that visits from Mr. Hastings are pretty severe things, and hospitality at Moorshedabad is an expensive virtue, though for provision it is one of the cheapest countries in the universe. No wonder that Mr. Hastings lengthened his visit, and made it extend near three months. Such hosts and such guests cannot be soon parted. Two hundred pounds a day for a visit! It is at the rate of 78,000*l.* a year for himself; and as I find his companion was put on the same allowance, it will be 146,000*l.* a year for hospitality to two English gentlemen. I believe that there is not a prince in Europe who goes to such expensive hospitality of splendor.

But that you may judge of the true nature of this hospitality

of corruption, I must bring before you the business of the visitor and the condition of the host, as stated by Mr. Hastings himself, who best knows what he was doing. He was, then, at the old capital of Bengal at the time of this expensive entertainment, on a business of retrenchment, and for the establishment of a most harsh, rigorous, and oppressive economy. He wishes the task were assigned to spirits of a less gentle kind. By Mr. Hastings's account, he was giving daily and hourly wounds to his humanity in depriving of their sustenance hundreds of persons of the ancient nobility of a great fallen kingdom. Yet it was in the midst of this galling duty, it was at that very moment of his tender sensibility, that, from the collected morsels plucked from the famished mouths of hundreds of decayed, indigent, and starving nobility, he gorged his ravenous maw with 200*l.* a day for his entertainment. In the course of all this proceeding your Lordships will not fail to observe he is never corrupt, but he is cruel; he never dines with comfort, but where he is sure to create a famine. He never robs from the loose superfluity of standing greatness; he devours the fallen, the indigent, the necessitous. His extortion is not like the generous rapacity of the princely eagle, who snatches away the living, struggling prey; he is a vulture, who feeds upon the prostrate, the dying, and the dead. As his cruelty is more shocking than his corruption, so his hypocrisy has something more frightful than his cruelty; for whilst his bloody and rapacious hand signs proscriptions, and now sweeps away the food of the widow and the orphan, his eyes overflow with

tears, and he converts the healing balm that bleeds from wounded humanity into a rancorous and deadly poison to the race of man.

Well, there was an end to this tragic entertainment, this feast of Tantalus. The few left on the pension-list, the poor remnants that had escaped, were they paid by his administratrix and deputy, Munny Begum? Not a shilling. No fewer than forty-nine petitions, mostly from the widows of the greatest and most splendid houses of Bengal, came before the Council, praying in the most deplorable manner for some sort of relief out of the pittance assigned them. His colleagues, General Clavering, Colonel Monson, and Mr. Francis, men who, when England is reproached for the government of India, will, I repeat it, as a shield be held up between this nation and infamy, did, in conformity to the strict orders of the Directors, appoint Mahomed Reza Khân to his old offices, that is, to the general superintendency of the household and the administration of justice, a person who by his authority might keep some order in the ruling family and in the state. The Court of Directors authorized them to assure those offices to him, with a salary reduced indeed to 30,000*l.* a year, during his good behavior. But Mr. Hastings, as soon as he obtained a majority by the death of the two best men ever sent to India, notwithstanding the orders of the Court of Directors, in spite of the public faith solemnly pledged to Mahomed Reza Khân, without a shadow of complaint, had the audacity to dispossess him of all his offices, and appoint his bribing patroness, the old dancing-girl, Munny

Begum, once more to the viceroyalty and all its attendant honors and functions.

The pretence was more insolent and shameless than the act. Modesty does not long survive innocence. He brings forward the miserable pageant of the Nabob, as he called him, to be the instrument of his own disgrace, and the scandal of his family and government. He makes him to pass by his mother, and to petition us to appoint Munny Begum once more to the administration of the viceroyalty. He distributed Mahomed Reza Khân's salary as a spoil.

When the orders of the Court to restore Mahomed Reza Khân, with their opinion on the corrupt cause of his removal, and a second time to pledge to him the public faith for his continuance, were received, Mr. Hastings, who had been just before a pattern of obedience, when the despoiling, oppressing, imprisoning, and persecuting this man was the object, yet, when the order was of a beneficial nature, and pleasant to a well-formed mind, he at once loses all his old principles, he grows stubborn and refractory, and refuses obedience. And in this sullen, uncomplying mood he continues, until, to gratify Mr. Francis, in an agreement on some of their differences, he consented to his proposition of obedience to the appointment of the Court of Directors. He grants to his arrangement of convenience what he had refused to his duty, and replaces that magistrate. But mark the double character of the man, never true to anything but fraud and duplicity. At the same time that he publicly replaces this magistrate, pretending

compliance with his colleague and obedience to his masters, he did, in defiance of his own and the public faith, privately send an assurance to the Nabob, that is, to Munny Begum,—informs her that he was compelled by necessity to the present arrangement in favor of Mahomed Reza Khân, but that on the first opportunity he would certainly displace him again. And he kept faith with his corruption; and to show how vainly any one sought protection in the lawful authority of this kingdom, he displaced Mahomed Reza Khân from the lieutenancy and controllership, leaving him only the judicial department miserably curtailed.

But does he adhere to his old pretence of freedom to the Nabob? No such thing. He appoints an absolute master to him under the name of Resident, a creature of his personal favor, Sir John D'Oyly, from whom there is not one syllable of correspondence and not one item of account. How grievous this yoke was to that miserable captive appears by a paper of Mr. Hastings, in which he acknowledges that the Nabob had offered, out of the 160,000*l.* payable to him yearly, to give up to the Company no less than 40,000*l.* a year, in order to have the free disposal of the rest. On this all comment is superfluous. Your Lordships are furnished with a standard by which you may estimate his real receipt from the revenue assigned to him, the nature of the pretended Residency, and its predatory effects. It will give full credit to what was generally rumored and believed, that substantially and beneficially the Nabob never received fifty out of the one hundred and sixty thousand pounds; which will

account for his known poverty and wretchedness, and that of all about him.

Thus by his corrupt traffic of bribes with one scandalous woman he disgraced and enfeebled the native Mahomedan government, captived the person of the sovereign, and ruined and subverted the justice of the country. What is worse, the steps taken for the murder of Nundcomar, his accuser, have confirmed and given sanction not only to the corruptions then practised by the Governor-General, but to all of which he has since been guilty. This will furnish your Lordships with some general idea which will enable you to judge of the bribe for which he sold the country government.

Under this head you will have produced to you full proof of his sale of a judicial office to a person called Khân Jehan Khân, and the modes he took to frustrate all inquiry on that subject, upon a wicked and false pretence, that, according to his religious scruples, he could not be sworn.

The great end and object I have in view is to show the criminal tendency, the mischievous nature of these crimes, and the means taken to elude their discovery. I am now giving your Lordships that general view which may serve to characterize Mr. Hastings's administration in all the other parts of it.

It was not true in fact, as Mr. Hastings gives out, that there was nothing now against him, and that, when he had got rid of Nundcomar and his charge, he got rid of the whole. No such thing. An immense load of charges of bribery remained. They

were coming afterwards from every part of the province; and there was no office in the execution of justice which he was not accused of having sold in the most flagitious manner.

After all this thundering the sky grew calm and clear, and Mr. Hastings sat with recorded peculation, with peculation proved upon oath on the minutes of that very Council,—he sat at the head of that Council and that board where his peculations were proved against him. These were afterwards transmitted and recorded in the registers of his masters, as an eternal monument of his corruption, and of his high disobedience, and flagitious attempts to prevent a discovery of the various peculations of which he had been guilty, to the disgrace and ruin of the country committed to his care.

Mr. Hastings, after the execution of Nundcomar, if he had intended to make even a decent and commonly sensible use of it, would naturally have said, "This man is justly taken away who has accused me of these crimes; but as there are other witnesses, as there are other means of a further inquiry, as the man is gone of whose perjuries I might have reason to be afraid, let us now go into the inquiry." I think he did very ill not to go into the inquiry when the man was alive; but be it so, that he was afraid of him, and waited till he was removed, why not afterwards go into such an inquiry? Why not go into an inquiry of all the other peculations and charges upon him, which were innumerable, one of which I have just mentioned in particular, the charge of Munny Begum, of having received from her, or her

adopted son, a bribe of 40,000*l*.?

Is it fit for a governor to say, will Mr. Hastings say before this august assembly, "I may be accused in a court of justice,—I am upon my defence,—let all charges remain against me,—I will not give you an account"? Is it fit that a governor should sit with recorded bribery upon him at the head of a public board and the government of a great kingdom, when it is in his power by inquiry to do it away? No: the chastity of character of a man in that situation ought to be as dear to him as his innocence. Nay, more depended upon it. His innocence regarded himself; his character regarded the public justice, regarded his authority, and the respect due to the English in that country. I charge it upon him, that not only did he suppress the inquiry to the best of his power, (and it shall be proved,) but he did not in any one instance endeavor to clear off that imputation and reproach from the English government. He went further; he never denied hardly any of those charges at the time. They are so numerous that I cannot be positive; some of them he might meet with some sort of denial, but the most part he did not.

The first thing a man under such an accusation owes to the world is to deny the charge; next, to put it to the proof; and lastly, to let inquiry freely go on. He did not permit this, but stopped it all in his power. I am to mention some exceptions, perhaps, hereafter, which will tend to fortify the principle tenfold.

He promised, indeed, the Court of Directors (to whom he never denied the facts) a full and liberal explanation of these

transactions; which full and liberal explanation he never gave. Many years passed; even Parliament took notice of it; and he never gave them a liberal explanation, or any explanation at all of them. A man may say, "I am threatened with a suit in a court, and it may be very disadvantageous to me, if I disclose my defence." That is a proper answer for a man in common life, who has no particular character to sustain; but is that a proper answer for a governor accused of bribery, that accusation transmitted to his masters, and his masters giving credit to it? Good God! is that a state in which a man is to say, "I am upon the defensive—I am on my guard,—I will give you no satisfaction,—I have promised it, but I have already deferred it for seven or eight years"? Is not this tantamount to a denial?

Mr. Hastings, with this great body of bribery against him, was providentially freed from Nundcomar, one of his accusers, and, as good events do not come alone, (I think there is some such proverb,) it did so happen that all the rest, or a great many of them, ran away. But, however, the recorded evidence of the former charges continued; no new evidence came in; and Mr. Hastings enjoyed that happy repose which branded peculation, fixed and eternized upon the records of the Company, must leave upon a mind conscious of its own integrity.

My Lords, I will venture to say, there is no man but owes something to his character. It is the grace, undoubtedly, of a virtuous, firm mind often to despise common, vulgar calumny; but if ever there is an occasion in which it does become such a

mind to disprove it, it is the case of being charged in high office with pecuniary malversation, pecuniary corruption. There is no case in which it becomes an honest man, much less a great man, to leave upon record specific charges against him of corruption in his government, without taking any one step whatever to refute them.

Though Mr. Hastings took no step to refute the charges, he took many steps to punish the authors of them; and those miserable people who had the folly to make complaints against Mr. Hastings, to make them under the authority of an act of Parliament, under every sanction of public faith, yet, in consequence of those charges, every person concerned in them has been, as your Lordships will see, since his restoration to power, absolutely undone, brought from the highest situation to the lowest misery, so that they may have good reason to repent they ever trusted an English Council, that they ever trusted a Court of Directors, that they ever trusted an English act of Parliament, that they ever dared to make their complaints.

And here I charge upon Mr. Hastings, that, by never taking a single step to defeat or detect the falsehood of any of those charges against him, and by punishing the authors of them, he has been guilty of such a subversion of all the principles of British government as will deserve, and will I dare say meet, your Lordships' most severe animadversion.

In the course of this inquiry we find a sort of pause in his peculations, a sort of gap in the history, as if pages were

torn out. No longer we meet with the same activity in taking money that was before found; not even a trace of complimentary presents is to be found in the records during the time whilst General Clavering, Colonel Monson, and Mr. Francis formed the majority of the Council. There seems to have been a kind of truce with that sort of conduct for a while, and Mr. Hastings rested upon his arms. However, the very moment Mr. Hastings returned to power, peculation began again just at the same instant; the moment we find him free from the compulsion and terror of a majority of persons otherwise disposed than himself, we find him at his peculation again.

My Lords, at this time very serious inquiries had begun in the House of Commons concerning peculation. They did not go directly to Bengal, but they began upon the coast of Coromandel, and with the principal governors there. There was, however, an universal opinion (and justly founded) that these inquiries would go to far greater lengths. Mr. Hastings was resolved, then, to change the whole course and order of his proceeding. Nothing could persuade him, upon any account, to lay aside his system of bribery: that he was resolved to persevere in. The point was now to reconcile it with his safety. The first thing he did was to attempt to conceal it; and accordingly we find him depositing very great sums of money in the public treasury through the means of the two persons I have already mentioned, namely, the deputy-treasurer and the accountant,—paying them in and taking bonds for them as money of his own, and bearing legal interest.

This was his method of endeavoring to conceal some at least of his bribes: for I would not suggest, nor have your Lordships to think, that I believe that these were his only bribes,—for there is reason to think there was an infinite number besides; but it did so happen that they were those bribes which he thought might be discovered, some of which he knew were discovered, and all of which he knew might become the subject of a Parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. Hastings said he might have concealed them forever. Every one knows the facility of concealing corrupt transactions everywhere, in India particularly. But this is by himself proved not to be universally true, at least not to be true in his own opinion; for he tells you, in his letter from Cheltenham, that he *would* have concealed the Nabob's 100,000*l.*, but that the magnitude rendered it easy of discovery. He, therefore, avows an intention of concealment.

But it happens here, very singularly, that this sum, which his fears of discovery by *others* obliged him to discover *himself*, happens to be one of those of which no trace whatsoever appears, except merely from the operation of his own apprehensions. There is no collateral testimony: Middleton knew nothing of it; Anderson knew nothing of it; it was not directly communicated to the faithful Larkins or the trusty Croftes;—which proves, indeed, the facility of concealment. The fact is, you find the application always upon the discovery. But concealment or discovery is a thing of accident.

The bribes which I have hitherto brought before your Lordships belong to the first period of his bribery, before he thought of the doctrine on which he has since defended it. There are many other bribes which we charge him with having received during this first period, before an improving conversation and close virtuous connection with great lawyers had taught him how to practise bribes in such a manner as to defy detection, and instead of punishment to plead merit. I am not bound to find order and consistency in guilt: it is the reign of disorder. The order of the proceeding, as far as I am able to trace such a scene of prevarication, direct fraud, falsehood, and falsification of the public accounts, was this. From bribes he knew he could never abstain; and his then precarious situation made him the more rapacious. He knew that a few of his former bribes had been discovered, declared, recorded,—that for the moment, indeed, he was secure, because all informers had been punished and all concealers rewarded. He expected hourly a total change in the Council, and that men like Clavering and Monson might be again joined to Francis, that some great avenger should arise from their ashes,—"*Exoriare, aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor*,"—and that a more severe investigation and an infinitely more full display would be made of his robbery than hitherto had been done. He therefore began, in the agony of his guilt, to cast about for some device by which he might continue his offence, if possible, with impunity,—and possibly make a merit of it. He therefore first carefully perused the act of Parliament

forbidding bribery, and his old covenant engaging him not to receive presents. And here he was more successful than upon former occasions. If ever an act was studiously and carefully framed to prevent bribery, it is that law of the 13th of the King, which he well observes admits no latitudes of construction, no subterfuge, no escape, no evasion. Yet has he found a defence of his crimes even in the very provisions which were made for their prevention and their punishment. Besides the penalty which belongs to every informer, the East India Company was invested with a fiction of property in all such bribes, in order to drag them with more facility out of the corrupt hands which held them. The covenant, with an exception of one hundred pounds, and the act of Parliament, without any exception, declared that the Governor-General and Council should receive no presents *for their own use*. He therefore concluded that the system of bribery and extortion might be clandestinely and safely carried on, provided the party taking the bribes had an inward intention and mental reservation that they should be privately applied to the Company's service in any way the briber should think fit, and that on many occasions this would prove the best method of supply for the exigencies of their service.

He accordingly formed, or pretended to form, a private bribe exchequer, collateral with and independent of the Company's public exchequer, though in some cases administered by those whom for his purposes he had placed in the regular official department. It is no wonder that he has taken to himself an

extraordinary degree of merit. For surely such an invention of finance, I believe, never was heard of,—an exchequer wherein extortion was the assessor, fraud the cashier, confusion the accountant, concealment the reporter, and oblivion the remembrancer: in short, such as I believe no man, but one driven by guilt into frenzy, could ever have dreamed of.

He treats the official and regular Directors with just contempt, as a parcel of mean, mechanical book-keepers. He is an eccentric book-keeper, a Pindaric accountant. I have heard of "the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling." Here was a revenue exacted from whom he pleased, at what times he pleased, in what proportions he pleased, through what persons he pleased, by what means he pleased, to be accounted for or not, at his discretion, and to be applied to what service he thought proper. I do believe your Lordships stand astonished at this scheme; and indeed I should be very loath to venture to state such a scheme at all, however I might have credited it myself, to any sober ears, if, in his defence before the House of Commons, and before the Lords, he had not directly admitted the fact of taking the bribes or forbidden presents, and had not in those defences, and much more fully in his correspondence with the Directors, admitted the fact, and justified it upon these very principles.

As this is a thing so unheard-of and unexampled in the world, I shall first endeavor to account as well as I can for his motives to it, which your Lordships will receive or reject, just as you shall find them tally with the evidence before you: I say, his

motives to it; because I contend that public valid reasons for it he could have none; and the idea of making the corruption of the Governor-General a resource to the Company never did or could for a moment enter into his thoughts. I shall then take notice of the juridical constructions upon which he justifies his acting in this extraordinary manner; and lastly, show you the concealments, prevarications, and falsehoods with which he endeavors to cover it. Because wherever you find a concealment you make a discovery. Accounts of money received and paid ought to be regular and official.

He wrote over to the Court of Directors, that there were certain sums of money he had received and which were not his own, but that he had received them for their use. By this time his intercourse with gentlemen of the law became more considerable than it had been before. When first attacked for presents, he never denied the receipt of them, or pretended to say they were for public purposes; but upon looking more into the covenants, and probably with better legal advice, he found that no money could be legally received for his own use; but as these bribes were directly given and received as for his own use, yet (says he) "there was an inward destination of them in my own mind to your benefit, and to your benefit have I applied them."

Now here is a new system of bribery, contrary to law, very ingenious in the contrivance, but, I believe, as unlikely to produce its intended effect upon the mind of man as any pretence that was ever used. Here Mr. Hastings changes his ground. Before, he was

accused as a peculator; he did not deny the fact; he did not refund the money; he fought it off; he stood upon the defensive, and used all the means in his power to prevent the inquiry. That was the first era of his corruption,—a bold, ferocious, plain, downright use of power. In the second, he is grown a little more careful and guarded,—the effect of subtilty. He appears no longer as a defendant; he holds himself up with a firm, dignified, and erect countenance, and says, "I am not here any longer as a delinquent, a receiver of bribes, to be punished for what I have done wrong, or at least to suffer in my character for it. No: I am a great inventive genius, who have gone out of all the ordinary roads of finance, have made great discoveries in the unknown regions of that science, and have for the first time established the corruption of the supreme magistrate as a principle of resource for government."

There are crimes, undoubtedly, of great magnitude, naturally fitted to create horror, and that loudly call for punishment, that have yet no idea of *turpitude* annexed to them; but unclean hands, bribery, venality, and peculation are offences of turpitude, such as, in a governor, at once debase the person and degrade the government itself, making it not only *horrible*, but vile and contemptible in the eyes of all mankind. In this humiliation and abjectness of guilt, he comes here not as a criminal on his defence, but as a vast fertile genius who has made astonishing discoveries in the art of government,—"*Dicam insigne, recens, alio indictum ore*"—who, by his flaming zeal and the prolific

ardor and energy of his mind, has boldly dashed out of the common path, and served his country by new and untrodden ways; and now he generously communicates, for the benefit of all future governors and all future governments, the grand arcanum of his long and toilsome researches. He is the first, but, if we do not take good care, he will not be the last, that has established the corruption of the supreme magistrate among the settled resources of the state; and he leaves this principle as a bountiful donation, as the richest deposit that ever was made in the treasury of Bengal. He claims glory and renown from that by which every other person since the beginning of time has been dishonored and disgraced. It has been said of an ambassador, that he is a person employed to tell lies for the advantage of the court that sends him. His is patriotic bribery, and public-spirited corruption. He is a peculator for the good of his country. It has been said that private vices are public benefits. He goes the full length of that position, and turns his private peculation into a public good. This is what you are to thank him for. You are to consider him as a great inventor upon this occasion. Mr. Hastings improves on this principle. He is a robber in gross, and a thief in detail,—he steals, he filches, he plunders, he oppresses, he extorts,—all for the good of the dear East India Company,—all for the advantage of his honored masters, the Proprietors,—all in gratitude to the dear perfidious Court of Directors, who have been in a practice to heap "insults on his person, slanders on his character, and indignities on his station,—who never had the confidence in him

that they had in the meanest of his predecessors."

If you sanction this practice, if, after all you have exacted from the people by your taxes and public imposts, you are to let loose your servants upon them, to extort by bribery and peculation what they can from them, for the purpose of applying it to the public service only whenever they please, this shocking consequence will follow from it. If your Governor is discovered in taking a bribe, he will say, "What is that to you? mind your business; I intend it for the public service." The man who dares to accuse him loses the favor of the Governor-General and the India Company. They will say, "The Governor has been doing a meritorious action, extorting bribes for our benefit, and you have the impudence to think of prosecuting him." So that the moment the bribe is detected, it is instantly turned into a merit: and we shall prove that this is the case with Mr. Hastings, whenever a bribe has been discovered.

I am now to inform your Lordships, that, when he made these great discoveries to the Court of Directors, he never tells them who gave him the money, upon what occasion he received it, by what hands, or to what purposes he applied it.

When he can himself give no account of his motives, and even declares that he cannot assign any cause, I am authorized and required to find motives for him,—corrupt motives for a corrupt act. There is no one capital act of his administration that did not strongly imply corruption. When a man is known to be free from all imputation of taking money, and it becomes an

established part of his character, the errors or even crimes of his administration ought to be, and are in general, traced to other sources. You know it is a maxim. But once convict a man of bribery in any instance, and once by direct evidence, and you are furnished with a rule of irresistible presumption that every other irregular act by which unlawful gain may arise is done upon the same corrupt motive. *Semel malus præsumitur semper malus.* As for good acts candor, charity, justice oblige me not to assign evil motives, unless they serve some scandalous purpose or terminate in some manifest evil end, so justice, reason, and common sense compel me to suppose that wicked acts have been done upon motives correspondent to their nature: otherwise I reverse all the principles of judgment which can guide the human mind, and accept even the symptoms, the marks and criteria of guilt, as presumptions of innocence. One that confounds good and evil is an enemy to the good.

His conduct upon these occasions may be thought irrational. But, thank God, guilt was never a rational thing: it distorts all the faculties of the mind; it perverts them; it leaves a man no longer in the free use of his reason; it puts him into confusion. He has recourse to such miserable and absurd expedients for covering his guilt as all those who are used to sit in the seat of judgment know have been the cause of detection of half the villainies in the world. To argue that these could not be his reasons, because they were not wise, sound, and substantial, would be to suppose, what is not true, that bad men were always discreet and able. But

I can very well from the circumstances discover motives which may affect a giddy, superficial, shattered, guilty, anxious, restless mind, full of the weak resources of fraud, craft, and intrigue, that might induce him to make these discoveries, and to make them in the manner he has done. Not rational, and well-fitted for their purposes, I am very ready to admit. For God forbid that guilt should ever leave a man the free, undisturbed use of his faculties! For as guilt never rose from a true use of our rational faculties, so it is very frequently subversive of them. God forbid that prudence, the first of all the virtues, as well as the supreme director of them all, should ever be employed in the service of any of the vices! No: it takes the lead, and is never found where justice does not accompany it; and if ever it is attempted to bring it into the service of the vices, it immediately subverts their cause. It tends to their discovery, and, I hope and trust, finally to their utter ruin and destruction.

In the first place, I am to remark to your Lordships, that the accounts he has given of one of these sums of money are totally false and contradictory. Now there is not a stronger presumption, nor can one want more reason to judge a transaction fraudulent, than that the accounts given of it are contradictory; and he has given three accounts utterly irreconcilable with each other. He is asked, "How came you to take bonds for this money, if it was not your own? How came you to vitiate and corrupt the state of the Company's records, and to state yourself a lender to the Company, when in reality you were their debtor?" His

answer was, "I really cannot tell; I have forgot my reasons; the distance of time is so great," (namely, a time of about two years, or not so long,) "I cannot give an account of the matter; perhaps I had this motive, perhaps I had another," (but what is the most curious,) "perhaps I had none at all which I can now recollect." You shall hear the account which Mr. Hastings himself gives, his own fraudulent representation, of these corrupt transactions. "For my motives for withholding the several receipts from the knowledge of the Council, or of the Court of Directors, and for taking bonds for part of these sums and paying others into the treasury as deposits on my own account, I have generally accounted in my letter to the Honorable the Court of Directors of the 22d of May, 1782,—namely, that I either chose to conceal the first receipts from public curiosity by receiving bonds for the amount, or possibly acted without any studied design which my memory at that distance of time could verify, and that I did not think it worth my care to observe the same means with the rest. It will not be expected that I should be able to give a more correct explanation of my intentions after a lapse of three years, having declared at the time that many particulars had escaped my remembrance; neither shall I attempt to add more than the clearer affirmation of the facts implied in that report of them, and such inferences as necessarily, or with a strong probability, follow them."

My Lords, you see, as to any direct explanation, that he fairly gives it up: he has used artifice and stratagem, which

he knows will not do; and at last attempts to cover the treachery of his conduct by the treachery of his memory. Frequent applications were made to Mr. Hastings upon this article from the Company,—gentle hints, *gemitus columbæ*,—rather, little amorous complaints that he was not more open and communicative; but all these gentle insinuations were never able to draw from him any further account till he came to England. When he came here, he left not only his memory, but all his notes and references, behind in India. When in India the Company could get no account of them, because he himself was not in England; and when he was in England, they could get no account, because his papers were in India. He then sends over to Mr. Larkins to give that account of his affairs which he was not able to give himself. Observe, here is a man taking money privately, corruptly, and which was to be sanctified by the future application of it, taking false securities to cover it, and who, when called upon to tell whom he got the money from, for what ends, and on what occasion, neither will tell in India nor can tell in England, but sends for such an account as he has thought proper to furnish.

I am now to bring before you an account of what I think much the most serious part of the effects of his system of bribery, corruption, and peculation. My Lords, I am to state to you the astonishing and almost incredible means he made use of to lay all the country under contribution, to bring the whole into such dejection as should put his bribes out of the way of discovery.

Such another example of boldness and contrivance I believe the world cannot furnish.

I have already shown, amongst the mass of his corruptions, that he let the whole of the lands to farm to the banians; next, that he sold the whole Mahomedan government of that country to a woman. This was bold enough, one should think; but without entering into the circumstances of the revenue change in 1772, I am to tell your Lordships that he had appointed six Provincial Councils, each consisting of many members, who had the ordinary administration of civil justice in that country, and the whole business of the collection of the revenues.

These Provincial Councils accounted to the Governor-General and Council, who in the revenue department had the whole management, control, and regulation of the revenue. Mr. Hastings did in several papers to the Court of Directors declare, that the establishment of these Provincial Councils, which at first he stated only as experimental, had proved useful in the experiment,—and on that use, and upon that experiment, he had sent even the plan of an act of Parliament, to have it confirmed with the last and most sacred authority of this country. The Court of Directors desired, that, if he thought any other method more proper, he would send it to them for their approbation.

Thus the whole face of the British government, the whole of its order and constitution, remained from 1772 to 1781. He had got rid, some time before this period, by death, of General Clavering, by death, of Colonel Monson, and by vexation and

persecution, and his consequent dereliction of authority, he had shaken off Mr. Francis. The whole Council consisting only of himself and Mr. Wheler, he, having the casting vote, was in effect the whole Council; and if ever there was a time when principle, decency, and decorum rendered it improper for him to do any extraordinary acts without the sanction of the Court of Directors, that was the time. Mr. Wheler was taken off,—despair perhaps rendering the man, who had been in opposition futilely before, compliant. The man is dead. He certainly did not oppose him; if he had, it would have been in vain. But those very circumstances which rendered it atrocious in Mr. Hastings to make any change induced him to make this. He thought that a moment's time was not to be lost,—that other colleagues might come, where he might be overpowered by a majority again, and not able to pursue his corrupt plans. Therefore he was resolved,—your Lordships will remark the whole of this most daring and systematic plan of bribery and peculation,—he resolved to put it out of the power of his Council in future to check or control him in any of his evil practices.

The first thing he did was to form an ostensible council at Calcutta for the management of the revenues, which was not effectually bound, except it thought fit, to make any reference to the Supreme Council. He delegated to them—that is, to four covenanted servants—those functions which by act of Parliament and the Company's orders were to be exercised by the Council-General; he delegated to four gentlemen, creatures of his own,

his own powers, but he laid them out to good interest. It appears odd that one of the first acts to a Governor-General, so jealous of his power as he is known to be, as soon as he had all the power in his own hands, should be to put all the revenues out of his own control. This upon the first view is an extraordinary proceeding. His next step was, without apprising the Court of Directors of his intention, or without having given an idea of any such intention to his colleagues while alive, either those who died in India, or those who afterwards returned to Europe, in one day, in a moment, to annihilate the whole authority of the Provincial Councils, and delegate the whole power to these four gentlemen.

These four gentlemen had for their secretary an agent given them by Mr. Hastings: a name that you will often hear of; a name at the sound of which all India turns pale; the most wicked, the most atrocious, the boldest, the most dexterous villain that ever the rank servitude of that country has produced. My Lords, I am speaking with the most assured freedom, because there never was a friend of Mr. Hastings, there never was a foe of Mr. Hastings, there never was any human person, that ever differed on this occasion, or expressed any other idea of Gunga Govind Sing, the friend of Mr. Hastings, whom he intrusted with this important post. But you shall hear, from the account given by themselves, what the Council thought of their functions, of their efficiency for the charge, and in whose hands that efficiency really was. I beg, hope, and trust, that your Lordships will learn from the persons themselves who were appointed to execute the

office their opinion of the real execution of it, in order that you may judge of the plan for which he destroyed the whole English administration in India.

"The Committee must have a dewan, or executive officer, call him by what name you please. This man, in fact, has all the revenue paid at the Presidency at his disposal, and can, if he has any abilities, bring all the renters under contribution. It is little advantage to restrain the Committee themselves from bribery or corruption, when their executive officer has the power of practising both undetected. To display the arts employed by a native on such occasions would fill a volume. He discovers the secret resources of the zemindars and renters, their enemies and competitors; and by the engines of hope and fear, raised upon these foundations, he can work them to his purpose. The Committee, with the best intentions, best abilities, and steadiest application, must after all be a tool in the hands of their dewan."

Your Lordships see what the opinion of the Council was of their own constitution. You see for what it was made. You see for what purposes the great revenue trust was taken from the Council-General, from the supreme government. You see for what purposes the executive power was destroyed. You have it from one of the gentlemen of this commission, at first four in number, and afterwards five, who was the most active, efficient member of it. You see it was made for the purpose of being a tool in the hands of Gunga Govind Sing; that integrity, ability, and vigilance could avail nothing; that the whole country might

be laid under contribution by this man, and that he could thus practise bribery with impunity. Thus your Lordships see the delegation of all the authority of the country, above and below, is given by Mr. Hastings to this Gunga Govind Sing. The screen, the veil, spread before this transaction, is torn open by the very people themselves who are the tools in it. They confess they can do nothing; they know they are instruments in the hands of Gunga Govind Sing; and Mr. Hastings uses his name and authority to make them such in the hands of the basest, the wickedest, the corruptest, the most audacious and atrocious villain ever heard of. It is to him all the English authority is sacrificed, and four gentlemen are appointed to be his tools and instruments. Tools and instruments for what? They themselves state, that, if he has the inclination, he has the power and ability to lay the whole country under contribution, that he enters into the most minute secrets of every individual in it, gets into the bottom of their family affairs, and has a power totally to subvert and destroy them; and we shall show upon that head, that he well fulfilled the purposes for which he was appointed. Did Mr. Hastings pretend to say that he destroyed the Provincial Councils for their corruptness or insufficiency, when he dissolved them? No: he says he has no objection to their competency, no charge to make against their conduct, but that he has destroyed them for his new arrangement. And what is his new arrangement? Gunga Govind Sing. Forty English gentlemen were removed from their offices by that change. Mr. Hastings did it, however,

very economically; for all these gentlemen were instantly put upon pensions, and consequently burdened the establishment with a new charge. Well, but the new Council was formed and constituted upon a very economical principle also. These five gentlemen, you will have it in proof, with the necessary expenses of their office, were a charge of 62,000*l.* a year upon the establishment. But for great, eminent, capital services, 62,000*l.*, though a much larger sum than what was thought fit to be allowed for the members of the Supreme Council itself, may be admitted. I will pass it. It shall be granted to Mr. Hastings, that these pensions, though they created a new burden on the establishment, were all well disposed, provided the Council did their duty. But you have heard what they say themselves: they are not there put to do any duty; they can do no duty; their abilities, their integrity, avail them nothing; they are tools in the hands of Gunga Govind Sing. Mr. Hastings, then, has loaded the revenue with 62,000*l.* a year to make Gunga Govind Sing master of the kingdoms of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa. What must the thing to be moved be, when the machinery, when the necessary tools, for Gunga Govind Sing have cost 62,000*l.* a year to the Company? There it is; it is not my representation, not the representation of observant strangers, of good and decent people, that understand the nature of that service, but the opinion of the tools themselves.

Now did Mr. Hastings employ Gunga Govind Sing without a knowledge of his character? His character was known to Mr. Hastings: it was recorded long before, when he was turned out

of another office. "During my long residence," says he, "in this country, this is the first time I heard of the character of Gunga Govind Sing being infamous. No information I have received, though I have heard *many* people speak ill of him, ever pointed to any particular *act* of infamy committed by Gunga Govind Sing. I have no intimate knowledge of Gunga Govind Sing. What I understand of his character has been from Europeans as well as natives." After,— "He had many enemies at the time he was proposed to be employed in the Company's service, and not *one advocate* among the natives who had immediate access to myself. I think, therefore, if his character had been such as has been described, the knowledge of it could hardly have failed to have been ascertained to me by the *specific* facts. I have heard him loaded, as I have many others, with general reproaches, but have never heard any one express a doubt of *his abilities*." Now, if anything in the world should induce you to put the whole trust of the revenues of Bengal, both above and below, into the hands of a single man, and to delegate to him the whole jurisdiction of the country, it must be that he either was, or at least was reputed to be, a man of integrity. Mr. Hastings does not pretend that he is reputed to be a man of integrity. He knew that he was not able to contradict the charge brought against him, and that he had been turned out of office by his colleagues, for reasons assigned upon record, and approved by the Directors, for malversation in office. He had, indeed, crept again into the Calcutta Committee; and they were upon the point of turning him out for malversation,

when Mr. Hastings saved them the trouble by turning out the whole Committee, consisting of a president and five members. So that in all times, in all characters, in all places, he stood as a man of a bad character and evil repute, though supposed to be a man of great abilities.

My Lords, permit me for one moment to drop my representative character here, and to speak to your Lordships only as a man of some experience in the world, and conversant with the affairs of men and with the characters of men.

I do, then, declare my conviction, and wish it may stand recorded to posterity, that there never was a *bad man* that had ability for *good service*. It is not in the nature of such men; their minds are so distorted to selfish purposes, to knavish, artificial, and crafty means of accomplishing those selfish ends, that, if put to any good service, they are poor, dull, helpless. Their natural faculties never have that direction; they are paralytic on that side; the muscles, if I may use the expression, that ought to move it, are all dead. They know nothing, but how to pursue selfish ends by wicked and indirect means. No man ever knowingly employed a bad man on account of his abilities, but for evil ends. Mr. Hastings knew this man to be bad; all the world knew him to be bad; and how did he employ him? In such a manner as that he might be controlled by others? A great deal might be said for him, if this had been the case. There might be circumstances in which such a man might be used in a subordinate capacity. But who ever thought of putting such a man virtually in possession

of the whole authority both of the Committee and the Council-General, and of the revenues of the whole country?

As soon as we find Gunga Govind Sing here, we find him employed in the way in which he was meant to be employed: that is to say, we find him employed in taking corrupt bribes and corrupt presents for Mr. Hastings. Though the Committee were tools in his hands, he was a tool in the hands of Mr. Hastings; for he had, as we shall prove, constant, uniform, and close communications with Mr. Hastings. And, indeed, we may be saved a good deal of the trouble of proof; for Mr. Hastings himself, by acknowledging him to be his bribe-broker, has pretty well authenticated a secret correspondence between them. For the next great bribe as yet discovered to be taken by Mr. Hastings, about the time of his great operation of 1781, was the bribe of 40,000*l.*, which we charge to have been privately taken from one of two persons, but from which is not yet ascertained, but paid to him through this flagitious black agent of his iniquities, Gunga Govind Sing. The discovery is made by another agent of his, called Mr. Larkins, one of his white bribe-confidants, and by him made Accountant-General to the Supreme Presidency. For this sum, so clandestinely and corruptly taken, he received a bond to himself, on his own account, as for money lent to the Company. For, upon the frequent, pressing, tender solicitations of the Court of Directors, always insinuated to him in a very delicate manner, Mr. Hastings had written to Mr. Larkins to find out, if he could, some of his own bribes; and accordingly Mr. Larkins sent over

an account of various bribes,—an account which, even before it comes directly in evidence before you, it will be pleasant to your Lordships to read. In this account, under the head, "*Dinagapore, No. 1,*" I find "*Duplicate copy of the particulars of debts, in which the component parts of sundry sums received on the account of the Honorable Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies were received by Mr. Hastings and paid to the Sub-Treasurer.*" We find here, "*Dinagapore peshcush, four lacs of rupees, cabooleat*": that is, an agreement to pay four lacs of rupees, of which three were received and one remained in balance at the time this account was made out. All that we can learn from this account, after all our researches, after all the Court of Directors could do to squeeze it out of him, is, that he received from Dinagapore, at twelve monthly payments, a sum of about three lacs of rupees, upon an engagement to pay him four; that is, he received about 30,000*l.* out of 40,000*l.* which was to be paid him: and we are told that he received this sum through the hands of Gunga Govind Sing; and that he was exceedingly angry with Gunga Govind Sing for having kept back or defrauded him of the sum of 10,000*l.* out of the 40,000*l.* To keep back from him the fourth part of the whole bribe was very reprehensible behavior in Gunga Govind Sing, certainly very unworthy of the great and high trust which Mr. Hastings reposed in his integrity. My Lords, this letter tells us Mr. Hastings was much irritated at Gunga Govind Sing. You will hereafter see how Mr. Hastings behaves to persons against whom he is irritated for their frauds upon him in their joint concerns.

In the mean time Gunga Govind Sing rests with you as a person with whom Mr. Hastings is displeas'd on account of infidelity in the honorable trust of bribe undertaker and manager.

My Lords, you are not very much enlightened, I believe, by seeing these words, *Dinagapore peshcush*. We find a province, we find a sum of money, we find an agent, and we find a receiver. The *province* is *Dinagapore*, the *agent* is *Gunga Govind Sing*, the *sum* agreed on is 40,000*l.*, and the *receiver* of a part of that is *Mr. Hastings*. This is all that can be seen. Who it was that gave this sum of money to Mr. Hastings in this manner does no way appear; it is *murder by persons unknown*: and this is the way in which Mr. Hastings, after all the reiterated solicitations of Parliament, of the Company, and the public, has left the account of this bribe.

Let us, however, now see what was the state of transactions at Dinagapore at that period. For, if Mr. Hastings in the transactions at that period did anything for that country, it must be presumed this money was given for those acts; for Mr. Hastings confesses it was a sum of money corruptly received, but honestly applied. It does not signify much, at first view, from whom he received it; it is enough to fix upon him that he did receive it. But because the consequences of his bribes make the main part of what I intend to bring before your Lordships, I shall beg to state to you, with your indulgence, what I have been able to discover by a very close investigation of the records respecting this business of Dinagapore.

Dinagepore, Rungpore, and Edrackpore make a country, I believe, pretty nearly as large as all the northern counties of England, Yorkshire included. It is no mean country, and it has a prince of great, ancient, illustrious descent at the head of it, called the Rajah of Dinagepore.

I find, that, about the month of July, 1780, the Rajah of Dinagepore, after a long and lingering illness, died, leaving an half-brother and an adopted son. A litigation respecting the succession instantly arose in the family; and this litigation was of course referred to, and was finally to be decided by, the Governor-General in Council,—being the ultimate authority to which the decision of all these questions was to be referred. This cause came before Mr. Hastings, and I find that he decided the question in favor of the adopted son of the Rajah against his half-brother. I find that upon that decision a rent was settled, and a peshcush, or fine, paid. So that all that is in this transaction is fair and above-board: there is a dispute settled; there is a fine paid; there is a rent reserved to the Company; and the whole is a fair settlement. But I find along with it very extraordinary acts; for I find Mr. Hastings taking part in favor of the minor, agreeably to the principles of others, and contrary to his own. I find that he gave the guardianship of this adopted son to the brother of the Ranny, as she is called, or the widow of the deceased Rajah; and though the hearing and settling of this business was actually a part of the duty of his office, yet I find, that, when the steward of the province of Dinagepore was coming down to represent this case

to Mr. Hastings, Mr. Hastings, on pretence that it would only tend to increase the family dissensions, so far from hearing fully all the parties in this business, not only sent him back, but ordered him to be actually turned out of his office. If, then, the 40,000*l.* be the same with the money taken from the Rajah in 1780, to which account it seems to refer, (for it was taken in regular payments, beginning July, 1780, and ending at the same period in 1781,) it was a sum of money corruptly taken by him as a judge in a litigation of inheritance between two great parties. So that he received the sum of 40,000*l.* for a judgment; which, whether that judgment was right or wrong, true or false, he corruptly received.

This sum was received, as your Lordships will observe, through Gunga Govind Sing. He was the broker of the agreement: he was the person who was to receive it by monthly instalments, and he was to pay it to Mr. Hastings. His son was in the office of Register-General of the whole country, who had in his custody all the papers, documents, and everything which could tend to settle a litigation among the parties. If Mr. Hastings took this bribe from the Rajah of Dinagepore, he took a bribe from an infant of five years old through the hands of the Register. That is, the judge receives a bribe through the hands of the keeper of the genealogies of the family, the records and other documents, which must have had the principal share in settling the question.

This history of this Dinagepore peshcush is the public one received by the Company, and which is entered upon the record,

—but not the private, and probably the true history of this corrupt transaction.

Very soon after this decision, very soon after this peshcush was given, we find all the officers of the young Rajah, who was supposed to have given it, turned out of their employment by Gunga Govind Sing,—by the very man who received the peshcush for Mr. Hastings. We find them all turned out of their employments; we find them all accused, without any appearance or trace in the records of any proof of embezzlement, of neglect in the education of the minor Rajah, of the mismanagement of his affairs, or the allotment of an unsuitable allowance. And accordingly, to prevent the relations of his adopted mother, to prevent those who might be supposed to have an immediate interest in the family, from abusing the trust of his education and the trust of the management of his fortune, Gunga Govind Sing, (for I trust your Lordships would not suffer me, if I had a mind, to quote that tool of a thing, the Committee of Revenue, bought at 62,000*l.* a year,—you would not suffer me to name it, especially when you know all the secret agency of bribes in the hand of Gunga Govind Sing,)—this Gunga Govind Sing produces soon after another character, to whom he consigns the custody of the whole family and the whole province.

I will do Mr. Hastings the justice to say, that, if he had known there was another man more accomplished in all iniquity than Gunga Govind Sing, he would not have given him the first place in his confidence. But there is another next to him in the country,

whom you are to hear of by-and-by, called Debi Sing. This person, in the universal opinion of all Bengal, is ranked next to Gunga Govind Sing; and, what is very curious, they have been recorded by Mr. Hastings as rivals in the same virtues.

Arcades ambo,

Et cantare pares, et respondere parati.

But Mr. Hastings has the happiest modes in the world: these rivals were reconciled on this occasion, and Gunga Govind Sing appoints Debi Sing, superseding all the other officers for no reason whatever upon record. And because, like champions, they ought to go in pairs, there is an English gentleman, one Mr. Goodlad, whom you will hear of presently, appointed along with him. Absolute strangers to the Rajah's family, the first act they do is to cut off a thousand out of sixteen hundred a month from his allowance. They state (though there was a great number of dependants to maintain) that six hundred would be enough to maintain him. There appears in the account of these proceedings to be such a flutter about the care of the Rajah, and the management of his household: in short, that there never was such a tender guardianship as, always with the knowledge of Mr. Hastings, is exercised over this poor Rajah, who had just given (if he did give) 40,000*l.* for *his own* inheritance, if it was his due, —for the inheritance of *others*, if it was not his due. One would think he was entitled to some mercy; but, probably because the

money could not otherwise be supplied, his establishment was cut down by Debi Sing and Mr. Goodlad a thousand a month, which is just twelve thousand a year.

When Mr. Hastings had appointed those persons to the guardianship who had an interest in the management of the Rajah's education and fortune, one should have thought, before they were turned out, he would at least have examined whether such a step was proper or not. No: they were turned out without any such examination; and when I come to inquire into the proceedings of Gunga Govind Sing's Committee, I do not find that the new guardians have brought to account one single shilling they received, appointed as they were by that council newly made to superintend all the affairs of the Rajah. There is not one word to be found of an account: Debi Sing's honor, fidelity, and disinterestedness, and that of Mr. Goodlad, is sufficient; and that is the way in which the management and superintendence of one of the greatest houses in that country is given to the guardianship of strangers. And how is it managed? We find Debi Sing in possession of the Rajah's family, in possession of his affairs, in the management of his whole zemindary; and in the course of the next year he is to give him in farm the whole of the revenues of these three provinces. Now whether the peshcush was received for the nomination of the Rajah as a bribe in judgment, or whether Mr. Hastings got it from Debi Sing as a bribe in office, for appointing him to the guardianship of a family that did not belong to him, and for the dominion of three great and once

wealthy provinces,—(which is best or worst I shall not pretend to determine,)—you find the Rajah in his possession; you find his education, his household, in his possession; the public revenues are in his possession; they are given over to him.

If we look at the records, the letting of these provinces appears to have been carried on by the new Committee of Revenue, as the course and order of business required it should. But by the investigation into Mr. Hastings's money transactions, the insufficiency and fallacy of these records is manifest beyond a doubt. From this investigation it is discovered that it was in reality a bargain secretly struck between the Governor-General and Debi Sing, and that the Committee were only employed in the mere official forms. From the time that Mr. Hastings new-modelled the revenue system, nothing is seen in its true shape. We now know, in spite of the fallacy of these records, who the true grantor was: it will not be amiss to go a little further in supplying their defects, and to inquire a little concerning the grantee. This makes it necessary for me to inform your Lordships who Debi Sing is.

[Mr. Burke read the Committee's recommendation of Debi Sing to the Governor-General and Council; but the copy of the paper alluded to is wanting.]

Here is a choice; here is Debi Sing presented for his knowledge in business, his trust and fidelity, and that he is a person against whom no objection can be made. This is presented to Mr. Hastings, by him recorded in the Council Books, and

by him transmitted to the Court of Directors. Mr. Hastings has since recorded, that he knew this Debi Sing, (though he here publicly authorizes the nomination of him to all that great body of trusts,)—that he knew him to be a man completely capable of the most atrocious iniquities that were ever charged upon man. Debi Sing is appointed to all those great trusts, through the means of Gunga Govind Sing, from whom he (Mr. Hastings) had received 30,000*l.* as a part of a bribe.

Now, though it is a large field, though it is a thing that I must confess I feel a reluctance almost in venturing to undertake, exhausted as I am, yet such is the magnitude of the affair, such the evil consequences that followed from a system of bribery, such the horrible consequences of superseding all the persons in office in the country to give it into the hands of Debi Sing, that, though it is the public opinion, and though no man that has ever heard the name of Debi Sing does not know that he was only second to Gunga Govind Sing, yet it is not to my purpose, unless I prove that Mr. Hastings knew his character at the very time he accepts him as a person against whom no exception could be made.

It is necessary to inform your Lordships who this Debi Sing was, to whom these great trusts were committed, and those great provinces given.

It may be thought, and not unnaturally, that, in this sort of corrupt and venal appointment to high trust and office, Mr. Hastings has no other consideration than the money he received.

But whoever thinks so will be deceived. Mr. Hastings was very far from indifferent to the character of the persons he dealt with. On the contrary, he made a most careful selection; he had a very scrupulous regard to the aptitude of the men for the purposes for which he employed them, and was much guided by his experience of their conduct in those offices which had been sold to them upon former occasions.

Except Gunga Govind Sing, (whom, as justice required, Mr. Hastings distinguished by the highest marks of his confidence,) there was not a man in Bengal, perhaps not upon earth, a match for this Debi Sing. He was not an unknown subject, not one rashly taken up as an experiment. He was a tried man; and if there had been one more desperately and abandonedly corrupt, more wildly and flagitiously oppressive, to be found unemployed in India, large as his offers were, Mr. Hastings would not have taken this money from Debi Sing.

Debi Sing was one of those who in the early stages of the English power in Bengal attached himself to those natives who then stood high in office. He courted Mahomed Reza Khân, a Mussulman of the highest rank, of the tribe of Koreish, whom I have already mentioned, then at the head of the revenue, and now at the head of the criminal justice of Bengal, with all the supple assiduity of which those who possess no valuable art or useful talent are commonly complete masters. Possessing large funds, acquired by his apprenticeship and novitiate in the lowest frauds, he was enabled to lend to this then powerful man, in the

several emergencies of his variable fortune, very large sums of money. This great man had been brought down by Mr. Hastings, under the orders of the Court of Directors, upon a cruel charge, to Calcutta. He was accused of many crimes, and acquitted, 220,000*l.* in debt: that is to say, as soon as he was a great debtor, he ceased to be a great criminal.

Debi Sing obtained by his services no slight influence over Mahomed Reza Khân, a person of a character very different from his.

From that connection he was appointed to the farm of the revenue, and inclusively of the government of Purneah, a province of very great extent, and then in a state of no inconsiderable opulence. In this office he exerted his talents with so much vigor and industry that in a very short time the province was half depopulated and totally ruined.

The farm, on the expiration of his lease, was taken by a set of adventurers in this kind of traffic from Calcutta. But when the new undertakers came to survey the object of their future operations and future profits, they were so shocked at the hideous and squalid scenes of misery and desolation that glared upon them in every quarter, that they instantly fled out of the country, and thought themselves but too happy to be permitted, on the payment of a penalty of twelve thousand pounds, to be released from their engagements.

To give in a few words as clear an idea as I am able to give of the immense volume which might be composed of the

vexations, violence, and rapine of that tyrannical administration, the territorial revenue of Purneah, which had been let to Debi Sing at the rate of 160,000*l.* sterling a year, was with difficulty leased for a yearly sum under 90,000*l.*, and with all rigor of exaction produced in effect little more than 60,000*l.*, falling greatly below one half of its original estimate: so entirely did the administration of Debi Sing exhaust all the resources of the province; so totally did his baleful influence blast the very hope and spring of all future revenue.

The administration of Debi Sing was too notoriously destructive not to cause a general clamor. It was impossible that it should be passed over without animadversion. Accordingly, in the month of September, 1772, Mr. Hastings, then at the head of the Committee of Circuit, removed him for maladministration; and he has since publicly declared on record that he knew him to be capable of all the most horrid and atrocious crimes that can be imputed to man.

This brand, however, was only a mark for Mr. Hastings to find him out hereafter in the crowd, to identify him for his own, and to call him forth into action, when his virtues should be sufficiently matured for the services in which he afterwards employed him, through his instruments, Mr. Anderson and Gunga Govind Sing. In the mean time he left Debi Sing to the direction of his own good genius.

Debi Sing was stigmatized in the Company's records, his reputation was gone, but his funds were safe. In the arrangement

made by Mr. Hastings, in the year 1773, by which Provincial Councils were formed, Debi Sing became deputy-steward, or secretary, (soon in effect and influence principal steward,) to the Provincial Council of Moorshedabad, the seat of the old government, and the first province of the kingdom; and to his charge were committed various extensive and populous provinces, yielding an annual revenue of one hundred and twenty lacs of rupees, or 1,500,000*l*. This division of Provincial Council included Rungpore, Edrackpore, and others, where he obtained such a knowledge of their resources as subsequently to get possession of them.

Debi Sing found this administration composed mostly of young men, dissipated and fond of pleasure, as is usual at that time of life, but desirous of reconciling those pleasures, which usually consume wealth, with the means of making a great and speedy fortune,—at once eager candidates for opulence, and perfect novices in all the roads that lead to it. Debi Sing commiserated their youth and inexperience, and took upon him to be their guide.

There is a revenue in that country, raised by a tax more productive than laudable. It is an imposition on public prostitutes, a duty upon the societies of dancing-girls,—those seminaries from which Mr. Hastings has selected an administrator of justice and governor of kingdoms. Debi Sing thought it expedient to farm this tax,—not only because he neglected no sort of gain, but because he regarded it as no contemptible means of power

and influence. Accordingly, in plain terms, he opened a legal brothel, out of which he carefully reserved (you may be sure) the very flower of his collection for the entertainment of his young superiors: ladies recommended not only by personal merit, but, according to the Eastern custom, by sweet and enticing names which he had given them. For, if they were to be translated, they would sound,—Riches of my Life, Wealth of my Soul, Treasure of Perfection, Diamond of Splendor, Pearl of Price, Ruby of Pure Blood, and other metaphorical descriptions, that, calling up dissonant passions to enhance the value of the general harmony, heightened the attractions of love with the allurements of avarice. A moving seraglio of these ladies always attended his progress, and were always brought to the splendid and multiplied entertainments with which he regaled his Council. In these festivities, whilst his guests were engaged with the seductions of beauty, the intoxications of the most delicious wines of France, and the voluptuous vapor of perfumed India smoke, uniting the vivid satisfactions of Europe with the torpid blandishments of Asia, the great magician himself, chaste in the midst of dissoluteness, sober in the centre of debauch, vigilant in the lap of negligence and oblivion, attended with an eagle's eye the moment for thrusting in business, and at such times was able to carry without difficulty points of shameful enormity, which at other hours he would not so much as have dared to mention to his employers, young men rather careless and inexperienced than intentionally corrupt. Not satisfied with being pander to

their pleasures, he anticipated and was purveyor to their wants, and supplied them with a constant command of money; and by these means he reigned with an uncontrolled dominion over the province and over its governors.

For you are to understand that in many things we are very much misinformed with regard to the true seat of power in India. Whilst we were proudly calling India a British government, it was in substance a government of the lowest, basest, and most flagitious of the native rabble, to whom the far greater part of the English who figured in employment and station had from their earliest youth been slaves and instruments. Banians had anticipated the period of their power in premature advances of money, and have ever after obtained the entire dominion over their nominal masters.

By these various ways and means Debi Sing contrived to add job to job, employment to employment, and to hold, besides the farms of two very considerable districts, various trusts in the revenue,—sometimes openly appearing, sometimes hid two or three deep in false names, emerging into light or shrouding himself in darkness, as successful or defeated crimes rendered him bold or cautious. Every one of these trusts was marked with its own fraud; and for one of those frauds, committed by him in another name, by which he became deeply in balance to the revenue, he was publicly whipped *by proxy*.

All this while Mr. Hastings kept his eye upon him, and attended to his progress. But as he rose in Mr. Hastings's opinion,

he fell in that of his immediate employers. By degrees, as reason prevailed, and the fumes of pleasure evaporated, the Provincial Council emerged from their first dependence, and, finding nothing but infamy attending the councils and services of such a man, resolved to dismiss him. In this strait and crisis of his power the artist turned himself into all shapes. He offered great sums individually, he offered them collectively, and at last put a *carte blanche* on the table,—all to no purpose. "What are you?—stones? Have I not men to deal with? Will flesh and blood refuse me?"

When Debi Sing found that the Council had entirely escaped, and were proof against his offers, he left them with a sullen and menacing silence. He applied where he had good intelligence that these offers would be well received, and that he should at once be revenged of the Council, and obtain all the ends which through them he had sought in vain.

Without hesitation or scruple Mr. Hastings sold a set of innocent officers,—sold his fellow-servants of the Company, entitled by every duty to his protection,—sold English subjects, recommended by every tie of national sympathy,—sold the honor of the British government itself,—without charge, without complaint, without allegation of crime in conduct, or of insufficiency in talents: he sold them to the most known and abandoned character which the rank servitude of that clime produces. For *him* he entirely broke and quashed the Council of Moorshedabad, which had been the settled government for

twelve years, (a long period in the changeful history of India,)— at a time, too, when it had acquired a great degree of consistency, an official experience, a knowledge and habit of business, and was making full amends for early errors.

For now Mr. Hastings, having buried Colonel Monson and General Clavering, and having shaken off Mr. Francis, who retired half dead from office, began at length to respire; he found elbow-room once more to display his genuine nature and disposition, and to make amends in a riot and debauch of speculation for the forced abstinence to which he was reduced during the usurped dominion of honor and integrity.

It was not enough that the English were thus sacrificed to the revenge of Debi Sing. It was necessary to deliver over the natives to his avarice. By the intervention of bribe-brokerage he united the two great rivals in iniquity, who before, from an emulation of crimes, were enemies to each other,—Gunga Govind Sing and Debi Sing. He negotiated the bribe and the farm of the latter through the former; and Debi Sing was invested in farm for two years with the three provinces of Dinagepore, Edrackpore, and Rungpore,—territories making together a tract of land superior in dimensions to the northern counties of England, Yorkshire included.

To prevent anything which might prove an obstacle on the full swing of his genius, he removed all the restraints which had been framed to give an ostensible credit, to give some show of official order, to the plans of revenue administration framed from

time to time in Bengal. An officer, called a *dewan*, had been established in the provinces, expressly as a check on the person who should act as farmer-general. This office he conferred along with that of farmer-general on Debi Sing, in order that Debi might become an effectual check upon Sing; and thus these provinces, without inspection, without control, without law, and without magistrates, were delivered over by Mr. Hastings, bound hand and foot, to the discretion of the man whom he had before recorded as the destroyer of Purneah, and capable of every the most atrocious wickedness that could be imputed to man.

Fatally for the natives of India, every wild project and every corrupt sale of Mr. Hastings, and those whose example he followed, is covered with a pretended increase of revenue to the Company. Mr. Hastings would not pocket his bribe of 40,000*l.* for himself without letting the Company in as a sharer and accomplice. For the province of Rungpore, the object to which I mean in this instance to confine your attention, 7,000*l.* a year was added. But lest this avowed increase of rent should seem to lead to oppression, great and religious care was taken in the covenant so stipulated with Debi Sing, that *this* increase should not arise from any additional assessment whatsoever on the country, but solely from improvements in the cultivation, and the encouragement to be given to the landholder and husbandman. But as Mr. Hastings's bribe, of a far greater sum, was not guarded by any such provision, it was left to the discretion of the donor in what manner he was to indemnify himself for it.

Debi Sing fixed the seat of his authority at Dinagepore, where, as soon as he arrived, he did not lose a moment in doing his duty. If Mr. Hastings can forget his covenant, you may easily believe that Debi Sing had not a more correct memory; and accordingly, as soon as he came into the province, he instantly broke every covenant which he had entered into as a restraint on his avarice, rapacity, and tyranny, which, from the highest of the nobility and gentry to the lowest husbandmen, were afterwards exercised, with a stern and unrelenting impartiality, upon the whole people. For, notwithstanding the province before Debi Sing's lease was, from various causes, in a state of declension, and in balance for the revenue of the preceding year, at his very first entrance into office he forced from the zemindars or landed gentry an enormous increase of their tribute. They refused compliance. On this refusal he threw the whole body of zemindars into prison, and thus in bonds and fetters compelled them to sign their own ruin by an increase of rent which they knew they could never realize. Having thus gotten them under, he added exaction to exaction, so that every day announced some new and varied demand, until, exhausted by these oppressions, they were brought to the extremity to which he meant to drive them, the sale of their lands.

The lands held by the zemindars of that country are of many descriptions. The first and most general are those that pay revenue; the others are of the nature of demesne lands, which are free, and pay no rent to government. The latter are

for the immediate support of the zemindars and their families, —as from the former they derive their influence, authority, and the means of upholding their dignity. The lands of the former description were immediately attached, sequestered, and sold for the most trifling consideration. The rent-free lands, the best and richest lands of the whole province, were sold,—sold for—what do your Lordships think? They were sold for less than one year's purchase,—at less than one year's purchase, at the most underrated value; so that the fee-simple of an English acre of rent-free land sold at the rate of seven or eight shillings. Such a sale, on such terms, strongly indicated the purchaser. And how did it turn out in fact? The purchaser was the very agent and instrument of Mr. Hastings, Debi Sing himself. He made the exaction; he forced the sale; he reduced the rate; and he became the purchaser at less than one year's purchase, and paid with the very money which he had extorted from the miserable vendors.

When he had thus sold and separated these lands, he united the whole body of them, amounting to about 7,000*l.* sterling a year (but, according to the rate of money and living in that country, equivalent to a rental in England of 30,000*l.* a year); and then having raised in the new letting, as on the sale he had fraudulently reduced those lands, he reserved them as an estate for himself, or to whomsoever resembling himself Mr. Hastings should order them to be disposed.

The lands, thus sold for next to nothing, left of course the late landholder still in debt. The failure of fund, the rigorous exaction

of debt, and the multiplication of new arbitrary taxes next carried off the goods.

There is a circumstance attending this business which will call for your Lordships' pity. Most of the landholders or zemindars in that country happened at that time to be women. The sex there is in a state certainly resembling imprisonment, but guarded as a sacred treasure with all possible attention and respect. None of the coarse male hands of the law can reach them; but they have a custom, very cautiously used in all good governments there, of employing female bailiffs or sergeants in the execution of the law, where that sex is concerned. Guards, therefore, surrounded the houses; and then female sergeants and bailiffs entered into the habitations of these female zemindars, and held their goods and persons in execution,—nothing being left but what was daily threatened, their life and honor. The landholders, even women of eminent rank and condition, (for such the greatest part of the zemindars then were,) fled from the ancient seats of their ancestors, and left their miserable followers and servants, who in that country are infinitely numerous, without protection and without bread. The monthly instalment of Mr. Hastings's bribe was become due, and his rapacity must be fed from the vitals of the people.

The zemindars, before their own flight, had the mortification to see all the lands assigned to charitable and to religious uses, the humane and pious foundations of themselves and their ancestors, made to support infirmity and decrepitude, to give

feet to the lame and eyes to the blind, and to effect which they had deprived themselves of many of the enjoyments of life, cruelly sequestered and sold at the same market of violence and fraud where their demesne possessions and their goods had been before made away with. Even the lands and funds set aside for their funeral ceremonies, in which they hoped to find an end to their miseries, and some indemnity of imagination for all the substantial sufferings of their lives,—even the very feeble consolations of death, were, by the same rigid hand of tyranny,—a tyranny more consuming than the funeral pile, more greedy than the grave, and more inexorable than death itself,—seized and taken to make good the honor of corruption and the faith of bribery pledged to Mr. Hastings or his instruments.

Thus it fared with the better and middling orders of the people. Were the lower, the more industrious, spared? Alas! as their situation was far more helpless, their oppression was infinitely more sore and grievous, the exactions yet more excessive, the demand yet more vexatious, more capricious, more arbitrary. To afford your Lordships some idea of the condition of those who were served up to satisfy Mr. Hastings's hunger and thirst for bribes, I shall read it to you in the very words of the representative tyrant himself, Rajah Debi Sing. Debi Sing, when he was charged with a fraudulent sale of the ornaments of gold and silver of women, who, according to the modes of that country, had starved themselves to decorate their unhappy persons, argued on the improbability of this part of the charge

in these very words.

"It is notorious," says he, "that poverty generally prevails amongst the husbandmen of Rungpore, more perhaps than in any other parts of the country. They are seldom possessed of any property, except at the time they reap their harvest; and at others barely procure their subsistence. And this is the cause that such numbers of them were swept away by the famine. Their effects are only a little earthen-ware, and their houses only a handful of straw, the sale of a *thousand* of which would not perhaps produce twenty shillings."

These were the opulent people from whose superfluities Mr. Hastings was to obtain a gift of 40,000*l.*, over and above a large increase of rent, over and above the exactions by which the farmer must reimburse himself for the advance of the money by which he must obtain the natural profit of the farm as well as supply the peculium of his own avarice.

Therefore your Lordships will not be surprised at the consequences. All this unhappy race of little farmers and tillers of the soil were driven like a herd of cattle by his extortioners, and compelled by imprisonments, by fetters, and by cruel whippings, to engage for more than the whole of their substance or possible acquisition.

Over and above this, there was no mode of extortion, which the inventive imagination of rapacity could contrive, that was not contrived, and was not put in practice. On its own day your Lordships will hear, with astonishment, detestation, and horror,

the detail of these tyrannous inventions; and it will appear that the aggregate of these superadded demands amounted to as great a sum as the whole of the compulsory rent on which they were piled.

The country being in many parts left wholly waste and in all parts considerably depopulated by the first rigors, the full rate of the district was exacted from the miserable survivors. Their burdens were increased, as their fellow-laborers, to whose joint efforts they were to owe the means of payment, diminished. Driven to make payments beyond all possible calculation, previous to receipts and above their means, in a very short time they fell into the hands of usurers.

The usurers, who under such a government held their own funds by a precarious tenure, and were to lend to those whose substance was still more precarious, to the natural hardness and austerity of that race of men had additional motives to extortion, and made their terms accordingly. And what were the terms these poor people were obliged to consent to, to answer the bribes and peshcush paid to Mr. Hastings?—five, ten, twenty, forty per cent? No! at an interest of six hundred per cent per annum, payable by the day! A tiller of land to pay six hundred per cent to discharge the demands of government! What exhaustless fund of opulence could supply this destructive resource of wretchedness and misery? Accordingly, the husbandman ground to powder between the usurer below and the oppressor above, the whole crop of the country was forced at once to market; and the market

glutted, overcharged, and suffocated, the price of grain fell to the fifth part of its usual value. The crop was then gone, but the debt remained. An universal treasury extent and process of execution followed on the cattle and stock, and was enforced with more or less rigor in every quarter. We have it in evidence, that in those sales five cows were sold for not more than seven or eight shillings. All other things were depreciated in the same proportion. The sale of the instruments of husbandry succeeded to that of the corn and stock. Instances there are, where, all other things failing, the farmers were dragged from the court to their houses, in order to see them first plundered, and then burnt down before their faces. It was not a rigorous collection of revenue, it was a savage war made upon the country.

The peasants were left little else than their families and their bodies. The families were disposed of. It is a known observation, that those who have the fewest of all other worldly enjoyments are the most tenderly attached to their children and wives. The most tender of parents sold their children at market. The most fondly jealous of husbands sold their wives. The tyranny of Mr. Hastings extinguished every sentiment of father, son, brother, and husband!

I come now to the last stage of their miseries. Everything visible and vendible was seized and sold. Nothing but the bodies remained.

It is the nature of tyranny and rapacity never to learn moderation from the ill-success of first oppressions; on the

contrary, all oppressors, all men thinking highly of the methods dictated by their nature, attribute the frustration of their desires to the want of sufficient rigor. Then they redouble the efforts of their impotent cruelty, which producing, as they must ever produce, new disappointments, they grow irritated against the objects of their rapacity; and then rage, fury, and malice, implacable because unprovoked, recruiting and reinforcing their avarice, their vices are no longer human. From cruel men they are transformed into savage beasts, with no other vestiges of reason left but what serves to furnish the inventions and refinements of ferocious subtlety, for purposes of which beasts are incapable and at which fiends would blush.

Debi Sing and his instruments suspected, and in a few cases they suspected justly, that the country people had purloined from their own estates, and had hidden in secret places in the circumjacent deserts, some small reserve of their own grain to maintain themselves during the unproductive months of the year, and to leave some hope for a future season. But the under-tyrants knew that the demands of Mr. Hastings would admit no plea for delay, much less for subtraction of his bribe, and that he would not abate a shilling of it to the wants of the whole human race. These hoards, real or supposed, not being discovered by menaces and imprisonment, they fell upon the last resource, the naked bodies of the people. And here, my Lords, began such a scene of cruelties and tortures as I believe no history has ever presented to the indignation of the world,—such as I am sure, in the most

barbarous ages, no politic tyranny, no fanatic persecution, has ever yet exceeded. Mr. Paterson, the commissioner appointed to inquire into the state of the country, makes his own apology and mine for opening this scene of horrors to you in the following words: "That the punishments inflicted upon the ryots, both of Rungpore and Dinagepore, for non-payment, were in many instances of such a nature that I would rather wish to draw a veil over them than shock your feelings by the detail, but that, however disagreeable the task may be to myself, it is absolutely necessary, for the sake of justice, humanity, and the honor of government, that they should be exposed, to be prevented in future."

My Lords, they began by winding cords round the fingers of the unhappy freeholders of those provinces, until they clung to and were almost incorporated with one another; and then they hammered wedges of iron between them, until, regardless of the cries of the sufferers, they had bruised to pieces and forever crippled those poor, honest, innocent, laborious hands, which had never been raised to their mouths but with a penurious and scanty proportion of the fruits of their own soil; but those fruits (denied to the wants of their own children) have for more than fifteen years past furnished the investment for our trade with China, and been sent annually out, and without recompense, to purchase for us that delicate meal with which your Lordships, and all this auditory, and all this country, have begun every day for these fifteen years at their expense. To those beneficent hands

that labor for our benefit the return of the British government has been cords and hammers and wedges. But there is a place where these crippled and disabled hands will act with resistless power. What is it that they will not pull down, when they are lifted to heaven against their oppressors? Then what can withstand such hands? Can the power that crushed and destroyed them? Powerful in prayer, let us at least deprecate and thus endeavor to secure ourselves from the vengeance which these mashed and disabled hands may pull down upon us. My Lords, it is an awful consideration: let us think of it.

But to pursue this melancholy, but necessary detail. I am next to open to your Lordships, what I am hereafter to prove, that the most substantial and leading yeomen, the responsible farmers, the parochial magistrates and chiefs of villages, were tied two and two by the legs together; and their tormentors, throwing them with their heads downwards, over a bar, beat them on the soles of the feet with rattans, until the nails fell from the toes; and then attacking them at their heads, as they hung downward, as before at their feet, they beat them with sticks and other instruments of blind fury, until the blood gushed out at their eyes, mouths, and noses. Not thinking that the ordinary whips and cudgels, even so administered, were sufficient, to others (and often also to the same who had suffered as I have stated) they applied, instead of rattan and bamboo, whips made of the branches of the bale tree,—a tree full of sharp and strong thorns, which tear the skin and lacerate the flesh far worse than ordinary scourges. For others,

exploring with a searching and inquisitive malice, stimulated by an insatiate rapacity, all the devious paths of Nature for whatever is most unfriendly to man, they made rods of a plant highly caustic and poisonous, called *Bechettea*, every wound of which festers and gangrenes, adds double and treble to the present torture, leaves a crust of leprous sores upon the body, and often ends in the destruction of life itself. At night, these poor innocent sufferers, these martyrs of avarice and extortion, were brought into dungeons; and in the season when nature takes refuge in insensibility from all the miseries and cares which wait on life, they were three times scourged, and made to reckon the watches of the night by periods and intervals of torment. They were then led out, in the severe depth of winter, which there at certain seasons would be severe to any, to the Indians is most severe and almost intolerable,—they were led out before break of day, and, stiff and sore as they were with the bruises and wounds of the night, were plunged into water; and whilst their jaws clung together with the cold, and their bodies were rendered infinitely more sensible, the blows and stripes were renewed upon their backs; and then, delivering them over to soldiers, they were sent into their farms and villages to discover where a few handfuls of grain might be found concealed, or to extract some loan from the remnants of compassion and courage not subdued in those who had reason to fear that their own turn of torment would be next, that they should succeed them in the same punishment, and that their very humanity, being taken as a proof of their wealth,

would subject them (as it did in many cases subject them) to the same inhuman tortures. After this circuit of the day through their plundered and ruined villages, they were remanded at night to the same prison, whipped, as before, at their return to the dungeon, and at morning whipped at their leaving it, and then sent, as before, to purchase, by begging in the day, the reiteration of the torture in the night. Days of menace, insult, and extortion, nights of bolts, fetters, and flagellation, succeeded to each other in the same round, and for a long time made up all the vicissitude of life to these miserable people.

But there are persons whose fortitude could bear their own suffering; there are men who are hardened by their very pains, and the mind, strengthened even by the torments of the body, rises with a strong defiance against its oppressor. They were assaulted on the side of their sympathy. Children were scourged almost to death in the presence of their parents. This was not enough. The son and father were bound close together, face to face and body to body, and in that situation cruelly lashed together, so that the blow which escaped the father fell upon the son, and the blow which missed the son wound over the back of the parent. The circumstances were combined by so subtle a cruelty that every stroke which did not excruciate the sense should wound and lacerate the sentiments and affections of nature.

On the same principle, and for the same ends, virgins, who had never seen the sun, were dragged from the inmost sanctuaries

of their houses, and in the open court of justice, in the very place where security was to be sought against all wrong and all violence, (but where no judge or lawful magistrate had long sat, but in their place the ruffians and hangmen of Warren Hastings occupied the bench,) these virgins, vainly invoking heaven and earth, in the presence of their parents, and whilst their shrieks were mingled with the indignant cries and groans of all the people, publicly were violated by the lowest and wickedest of the human race. Wives were torn from the arms of their husbands, and suffered the same flagitious wrongs, which were indeed hid in the bottoms of the dungeons in which their honor and their liberty were buried together. Often they were taken out of the refuge of this consoling gloom, stripped naked, and thus exposed to the world, and then cruelly scourged; and in order that cruelty might riot in all the circumstances that melt into tenderness the fiercest natures, the nipples of their breasts were put between the sharp and elastic sides of cleft bamboos. Here in my hand is my authority; for otherwise one would think it incredible. But it did not end there. Growing from crime to crime, ripened by cruelty for cruelty, these fiends, at length outraging sex, decency, nature, applied lighted torches and slow fire—(I cannot proceed for shame and horror!)—these infernal furies planted death in the source of life, and where that modesty, which, more than reason, distinguishes men from beasts, retires from the view, and even shrinks from the expression, there they exercised and glutted their unnatural, monstrous, and nefarious cruelty,—there,

where the reverence of nature and the sanctity of justice dares not to pursue, nor venture to describe their practices.

These, my Lords, were sufferings which we feel all in common, in India and in England, by the general sympathy of our common nature. But there were in that province (sold to the tormentors by Mr. Hastings) things done, which, from the peculiar manners of India, were even worse than all I have laid before you; as the dominion of manners and the law of opinion contribute more to their happiness and misery than anything in mere sensitive nature can do.

The women thus treated lost their caste. My Lords, we are not here to commend or blame the institutions and prejudices of a whole race of people, radicated in them by a long succession of ages, on which no reason or argument, on which no vicissitudes of things, no mixtures of men, or foreign conquest, have been able to make the smallest impression. The aboriginal Gento inhabitants are all dispersed into tribes or castes,—each caste born to an invariable rank, rights, and descriptions of employment, so that one caste cannot by any means pass into another. With the Gentoos, certain impurities or disgraces, though without any guilt of the party, infer loss of caste; and when the highest caste, that of Brahmin, which is not only noble, but sacred, is lost, the person who loses it does not slide down into one lower, but reputable,—he is wholly driven from all honest society. All the relations of life are at once dissolved. His parents are no longer his parents; his wife is no longer his wife; his

children, no longer his, are no longer to regard him as their father. It is something far worse than complete outlawry, complete attainder, and universal excommunication. It is a pollution even to touch him; and if he touches any of his old caste, they are justified in putting him to death. Contagion, leprosy, plague, are not so much shunned. No honest occupation can be followed. He becomes an *halicore*, if (which is rare) he survives that miserable degradation.

Upon those whom all the shocking catalogue of tortures I have mentioned could not make to flinch one of the modes of losing caste for Brahmins and other principal tribes was practised. It was to harness a bullock at the court-door, and to put the Brahmin on his back, and to lead him through the towns, with drums beating before him. To intimidate others, this bullock, with drums, (the instrument, according to their ideas, of outrage, disgrace, and utter loss of caste,) was led through the country; and as it advanced, the country fled before it. When any Brahmin was seized, he was threatened with this pillory, and for the most part he submitted in a moment to whatever was ordered. What it was may be thence judged. But when no possibility existed of complying with the demand, the people by their cries sometimes prevailed on the tyrants to have it commuted for cruel scourging, which was accepted as mercy. To some Brahmins this mercy was denied, and the act of indelible infamy executed. Of these men one came to the Company's commissioner with the tale, and ended with these melancholy words: "I have suffered this

indignity; my caste is lost; my life is a burden to me: I call for justice." He called in vain.

Your Lordships will not wonder that these monstrous and oppressive demands, exacted with such tortures, threw the whole province into despair. They abandoned their crops on the ground. The people, in a body, would have fled out of its confines; but bands of soldiers invested the avenues of the province, and, making a line of circumvallation, drove back those wretches, who sought exile as a relief, into the prison of their native soil. Not suffered to quit the district, they fled to the many wild thickets which oppression had scattered through it, and sought amongst the jungles, and dens of tigers, a refuge from the tyranny of Warren Hastings. Not able long to exist here, pressed at once by wild beasts and famine, the same despair drove them back; and seeking their last resource in arms, the most quiet, the most passive, the most timid of the human race rose up in an universal insurrection; and, what will always happen in popular tumults, the effects of the fury of the people fell on the meaner and sometimes the reluctant instruments of the tyranny, who in several places were massacred. The insurrection began in Rungpore, and soon spread its fire to the neighboring provinces, which had been harassed by the same person with the same oppressions. The English Chief in that province had been the silent witness, most probably the abettor and accomplice, of all these horrors. He called in first irregular, and then regular troops, who by dreadful and universal military execution got the better of the impotent

resistance of unarmed and undisciplined despair. I am tired with the detail of the cruelties of peace. I spare you those of a cruel and inhuman war, and of the executions which, without law or process, or even the shadow of authority, were ordered by the English Revenue Chief in that province.

In our Indian government, whatever grievance is borne is denied to exist, and all mute despair and sullen patience is construed into content and satisfaction. But this general insurrection, which at every moment threatened to blaze out afresh, and to involve all the provinces in its flames, rent in pieces that veil of fraud and mystery that covers all the miseries of all the provinces. Calcutta rung with it; and it was feared it would go to England. The English Chief in the province, Mr. Goodlad, represented it to Mr. Hastings's Revenue Committee to be (what it was) the greatest and most serious disturbance that ever happened in Bengal. But, good easy man, he was utterly unable to guess to what cause it was to be attributed. He thought there was some irregularity in the collection, but on the whole judged that it had little other cause than a general conspiracy of the husbandmen and landholders, who, as Debi Sing's lease was near expiring, had determined not to pay any more revenue.

Mr. Hastings's Committee of Revenue, whilst these wounds were yet bleeding, and whilst a total failure was threatened in the rents of these provinces, thought themselves obliged to make an inquiry with some sort of appearance of seriousness into the causes of it. They looked, therefore, about them carefully,

and chose what they judged would be most plausible and least effective. They thought that it was necessary to send a special commissioner into the province, and one, too, whose character would not instantly blast the credit of his mission. They cast their eyes on a Mr. Paterson, a servant of the Company, a man of fair character, and long standing in the service. Mr. Paterson was a person known to be of a very cool temper, placid manners, moderate and middle opinions, unconnected with parties; and from such a character they looked for (what sometimes is to be expected from it) a compromising, balanced, neutralized, equivocal, colorless, confused report, in which the blame was to be impartially divided between the sufferer and the oppressor, and in which, according to the standing manners of Bengal, he would recommend oblivion as the best remedy, and would end by remarking, that retrospect could have no advantage, and could serve only to irritate and keep alive animosities; and by this kind of equitable, candid, and judge-like proceeding, they hoped the whole complaint would calmly fade away, the sufferers remain in the possession of their patience, and the tyrant of his plunder. In confidence of this event from this presumed character, Mr. Hastings's Committee, in appointing Mr. Paterson their commissioner, were not deficient in arming him with powers equal to the object of his commission. He was enabled to call before him all accountants, to compel the production of all accounts, to examine all persons,—not only to inquire and to report, but to decide and to redress.

Such is the imperfection of human wisdom that the Committee totally failed in their well-laid project. They were totally mistaken in their man. Under that cold outside the commissioner, Paterson, concealed a firm, manly, and fixed principle, a deciding intellect, and a feeling heart. My Lords, he is the son of a gentleman of a venerable age and excellent character in this country, who long filled the seat of chairman of the Committee of Supply in the House of Commons, and who is now enjoying repose from his long labors in an honorable age. The son, as soon as he was appointed to this commission, was awed by and dreaded the consequences. He knew to what temptation he should be exposed, from the known character of Debi Sing, to suppress or to misrepresent facts. He therefore took out a letter he had from his father, which letter was the preservation of his character and destruction of his fortune. This letter he always resorted to in all trying exigencies of his life. He laid the letter before him, and there was enjoined such a line of integrity, incorruptness, of bearing every degree of persecution rather than disguising truth, that he went up into the country in a proper frame of mind for doing his duty.

He went to Rungpore strongly impressed with a sense of the great trust that was placed in him; and he had not the least reason to doubt of full support in the execution of it,—as he, with every other white man in Bengal, probably, and every black, except two, was ignorant of the fact, that the Governor-General, under whose delegated authority he was sent, had been bribed by

the farmer-general of those provinces, and had sold them to his discretion for a great sum of money. If Paterson had known this fact, no human consideration would have induced him, or any other man of common prudence, to undertake an inquiry into the conduct of Debi Sing. Pity, my Lords, the condition of an honest servant in Bengal.

But Paterson was ignorant of this dark transaction, and went simply to perform a duty. He had hardly set his foot in the province, when the universal, unquestioned, uncontradicted testimony of the whole people, concurring with the manifest evidence of things which could not lie, with the face of an utterly ruined, undone, depopulated country, and saved from literal and exceptionless depopulation only by the exhibition of scattered bands of wild, naked, meagre, half-famished wretches, who rent heaven with their cries and howlings, left him no sort of doubt of the real cause of the late tumults. In his first letters he conveyed his sentiments to the Committee with these memorable words. "In my two reports I have set forth in a general manner the oppressions which provoked the ryots to rise. I shall, therefore, not enumerate them now. Every day of my inquiry serves but to confirm the facts. The wonder would have been, if they had not risen. It was not collection, but real robbery, aggravated by corporal punishment and every insult of disgrace,—and this not confined to a few, but extended over every individual. Let the mind of man be ever so much inured to servitude, still there is a point where oppressions will rouse it to resistance.

Conceive to yourselves what must be the situation of a ryot, when he sees everything he has in the world seized, to answer an exaggerated demand, and sold at so low a price as not to answer one half of that demand,—when he finds himself so far from being released, that he remains still subject to corporal punishment. But what must be his feelings, when his tyrant, seeing that kind of severity of no avail, adds family disgrace and loss of caste! You, Gentlemen, who know the reserve of the natives in whatever concerns their women, and their attachment to their castes, must allow the full effect of these prejudices under such circumstances."

He, however, proceeded with steadiness and method, and in spite of every discouragement which could be thrown in his way by the power, craft, fraud, and corruption of the farmer-general, Debi Sing, by the collusion of the Provincial Chief, and by the decay of support from his employers, which gradually faded away and forsook him, as his occasions for it increased. Under all these, and under many more discouragements and difficulties, he made a series of able, clear, and well-digested reports, attended with such evidence as never before, and, I believe, never will again appear, of the internal provincial administration of Bengal,—of evils universally understood, which no one was ever so absurd as to contradict, and whose existence was never denied, except in those places where they ought to be rectified, although none before Paterson had the courage to display the particulars. By these reports, carefully collated with the evidence, I have been

enabled to lay before you some of the effects, in one province and part of another, of Governor Hastings's general system of bribery.

But now appeared, in the most striking light, the good policy of Mr. Hastings's system of 1780, in placing this screen of a Committee between him and his crimes. The Committee had their lesson. Whilst Paterson is left collecting his evidence and casting up his accounts in Rungpore, Debi Sing is called up, in seeming wrath, to the capital, where he is received as those who have robbed and desolated provinces, and filled their coffers with seven hundred thousand pounds sterling, have been usually received at Calcutta, and sometimes in Great Britain. Debi Sing made good his ground in Calcutta, and when he had well prepared his Committee, in due time Paterson returns, appears, and reports.

Persons even less informed than your Lordships are well apprised that all officers representing government, and making in that character an authorized inquiry, are entitled to a presumptive credit for all their proceedings, and that their reports of facts (where there is no evidence of corruption or malice) are in the first instance to be taken for truth, especially by those who have authorized the inquiry; and it is their duty to put the burden of proof to the contrary on those who would impeach or shake the report.

Other principles of policy, and other rules of government, and other maxims of office prevailed in the Committee of Mr.

Hastings's devising. In order to destroy that just and natural credit of the officer, and the protection and support they were bound to afford him, they in an instant shift and reverse all the relations in which the parties stood.

This executive board, instituted for the protection of the revenue and of the people, and which was no court of justice in fact or name, turned their own representative officer, reporting facts according to his duty, into a voluntary accuser who is to make good his charge at his peril; the farmer-general, whose conduct was not criminally attacked, but appeared as one of the grounds of a public inquiry, is turned into a culprit before a court of justice, against whom everything is to be juridically made out or not admitted; and the members of an executive board, by usurpation and fraud, erect themselves into judges bound to proceed by strict rules of law.

By this infamous juggle they took away, as far as in them lay, the credit due to the proceedings of government. They changed the natural situation of proofs. They rejected the depositions of Paterson's witnesses, as not on oath, though they had never ordered or authorized them so to be taken.

They went further, and disabled, in a body, all the deponents themselves, whether on oath or not on oath by discrediting the whole province as a set of criminals who gave evidence to palliate their own rebellion. They administered interrogatories to the commissioner instead of the culprit. They took a base fellow, whom they had themselves ordered their commissioner

to imprison for crimes, (crimes charged on him, not by the commissioner, but by themselves,) and made him a complainant and a witness against him in the stupidest and most improbable of all accusations,—namely, that Paterson had menaced him with punishment, if he did not, in so many words, slander and calumniate Debi Sing; and then the Committee, seating this wretch as an assessor at their own board, who a few days before would have trembled like a whipped slave at the look of an European, encouraged him to interrogate their own commissioner.

[Here Mr. Burke was taken ill, and obliged to sit down.

After some time Mr. Burke again addressed the House.]

My Lords, I am sorry to break the attention of your Lordships in such a way. It is a subject that agitates me. It is long, difficult, and arduous; but with the blessing of God, if I can, to save you any further trouble, I will go through it this day.

I am to tell your Lordships, that the next step they took was, after putting Mr. Paterson as an accuser to make good a charge which he made out but too much to their satisfaction, they changed their battery.

[Mr. Burke's illness increased; upon which the House, on the motion of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, adjourned.]

FOURTH DAY: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1788

My Lords,—In any great undertaking, a failure in the midst of it, even from infirmity, though to be regarded principally as a misfortune, is attended with some slight shadow of disgrace; but your Lordships' humanity, and your love of justice, have remedied everything, and I therefore proceed with confidence this day.

My Lords, I think (to the best of my remembrance) the House adjourned at the period of time in which I was endeavoring to illustrate the mischiefs that happened from Mr. Hastings's throwing off his responsibility, by delegating his power to a nominal Council, and in reality to a black bad man, a native of the country, of the worst character that could be found in it,—and the consequence of it, in preventing the detection and the punishment of the grossest abuses that ever were known to be committed in India, or any other part of the world.

My Lords, I stated to you that Mr. Commissioner Paterson was sent into that country. I stated that he was sent into it with all the authority of government, with power to hear, and not only to hear and to report, but to redress, the grievances which he should find in the country. In short, there was nothing wanting to his power but an honest support. Your Lordships will be convinced that the road to fortune was easy to him. Debi Sing

for a favorable report would have given a large sum of money. Your Lordships will be convinced that the Committee would not have received such a report as a proof of bribery. They would rather consider him as a man whose conduct tended to conciliate, and to soften troublesome and difficult matters, and to settle the order of government as soon as possible.

Some of the things contained in his reports I have taken the liberty of laying before your Lordships, but very faintly, very imperfectly, and far short of my materials. I have stated, that the criminal, against whom the commissioner had made his report, instead of being punished by that strong hand of power which Mr. Hastings has thought proper to use upon other occasions, when he has endeavored to make princes, or persons in the rank and with the attributes of sovereign princes, feel whenever they have incurred his private resentments,—that this man was put into every situation of offence or defence which the most litigious and prevaricating laws that ever were invented in the very bosom of arbitrary power could afford him, or by which peculation and power were to be screened from the cries of an oppressed people.

Mr. Paterson, I stated, from being a commissioner directed to report, under the authority of government, to that government, was considered as a voluntary accuser, obliged to make good the articles of his charge. But I believe I stated that he did not long remain in that condition.

I shall now proceed to state to your Lordships, that this Debi Sing, fortified by this protection, which was extended

even to the lowest of his instruments, thought it high time to assume the superiority that belonged to a personage who had the Governor-General for his *pensioner*. No longer the sneaking tone of apology; no longer the modest allegations that the commissioner was misinformed;—he boldly accuses the representative of English government of forgery in order to destroy him; he criminales and recriminales, and lays about him without mercy.

Things were now in a proper train; the Committee find the cause growing and ripening to their wishes;—answers, replies, objections, and interrogatories,—accounts opposed to accounts, —balances now on the one side, now on the other,—now debtor becomes creditor, and creditor debtor,—until the proceedings were grown to the size of volumes, and the whole well fitted to perplex the most simple facts, and to darken the meridian sunshine of public notoriety. They prepared a report for the Governor-General and Council suitable to the whole tenor of their proceedings. Here the man whom they had employed and betrayed appeared in a new character. Observe their course with him. First he was made a commissioner. Then he was changed from a commissioner to be a voluntary accuser. He now undergoes another metamorphosis: he appears as a culprit before Mr. Hastings, on the accusation of the donor of Mr. Hastings's bribes. He is to answer to the accusations of Debi Sing. He is permitted to find materials for his own defence; and he, an old Company's servant, is to acknowledge it as a favor to be

again suffered to go into the province, without authority, without station, without public character, under the discountenance and frowns, and in a manner under prosecution, of the government. As a favor, he is suffered to go again into Rungpore, in hopes of finding among the dejected, harassed, and enslaved race of Hindoos, and in that undone province, men bold enough to stand forward, against all temptations of emolument, and at the risk of their lives, with a firm adherence to their original charge,— and at a time when they saw *him* an abandoned and persecuted private individual, whom they had just before looked upon as a protecting angel, carrying with him the whole power of a beneficent government, and whom they had applied to, as a magistrate of high and sacred authority, to hear the complaints and to redress the grievances of a whole people.

A new commission of junior servants was at the same time sent out to review and reëxamine the cause, to inquire into the inquiry, to examine into the examination, to control the report, to be commissioners upon the commission of Mr. Paterson. Before these commissioners he was made to appear as an accused person, and was put upon his defence, but without the authority and without the favor which ought to go with an accused person for the purpose of enabling him to make out such defence.

These persons went down into that country, and, after spending a long time in mere matters of form, found they could not do without a representative of Debi Sing, and accordingly they ordered Debi Sing to send up his *vakeel*.

I forgot to state to your Lordships what the condition of Debi Sing was during this proceeding. This man had been ordered to Calcutta on two grounds: one, on the matter of his flagitious misconduct at Rungpore; and the other, for a great failure in the payment of his stipulated revenue. Under this double accusation, he was to be considered, according to the usual mode of proceeding in such cases, as a prisoner; and he was kept, not in the common gaol of Calcutta, not in the prison of the fort, not in that gaol in which Rajah Nundcomar, who had been prime-minister of the empire, was confined, but, according to the mild ways of that country, where they choose to be mild, and the persons are protected by the official influence of power, under a free custody. He was put under a guard of sepoy, but not confined to his house; he was permitted to go abroad, where he was daily in conference with those who were to judge him; and having an address which seldom fails, and a dexterity never wanting to a man possessed of 700,000*l.*, he converted this guard into a retinue of honor: their bayonets were lowered, their muskets laid aside; they attended him with their side-arms, and many with silver verges in their hands, to mark him out rather as a great magistrate attended by a retinue than a prisoner under guard.

When he was ordered to send a vakeel to defend his conduct, he refused to send him. Upon which the commissioners, instead of saying, "If you will not send your agent, we will proceed in our inquiry without him," (and, indeed, it was not made necessary

by the commission that he should be there either by vakeel or otherwise,) condescendingly admitted his refusal, and suffered him to come up in person. He accordingly enters the province, attended with his guard, in the manner I have before mentioned, more as a person returning in triumph from a great victory than as a man under the load of all those enormous charges which I have stated. He enters the province in this manner; and Mr. Paterson, who saw himself lately the representative of the India Company, (an old servant of the Company is a great man in that country,) was now left naked, destitute, without any mark of official situation or dignity. He was present, and saw all the marks of imprisonment turned into marks of respect and dignity to this consummate villain whom I have the misfortune of being obliged to introduce to your Lordships' notice. Mr. Paterson, seeing the effect of the proceeding everywhere, seeing the minds of the people broken, subdued, and prostrate under it, and that, so far from having the means of detecting the villanies of this insolent criminal, appearing as a magistrate, he had not the means of defending even his own innocence, because every kind of information fled and was annihilated before him, represented to these young commissioners that this appearance of authority tended to strike terror into the hearts of the natives, and to prevent his receiving justice. The Council of Calcutta took this representation into their deliberate consideration; they found that it was true, that, if he had such an attendance any longer in this situation, (and a large attendance it was, such as the Chancellor

of this kingdom or the Speaker of the House of Commons does not appear with,) it would have an evil appearance. On the other hand, say they, "*If he should be left under a guard, the people would consider him as under disgrace.*" They therefore took a middle way, and ordered the guard not to attend him with fixed bayonets, which had the appearance of the custody of a prisoner, but to lower their muskets and unfix their bayonets.

The next step of these commissioners is to exclude Mr. Paterson from all their deliberations; and in order that both parties might be put on an equality, one would naturally conclude that the culprit, Debi Sing, was likewise excluded. Far from it: he sat upon the bench. Need I say any more upon this subject? The protection followed.

In this situation Mr. Paterson wrote one of the most pathetic memorials that ever was penned to the Council of Calcutta, submitting to his hard fate, but standing inflexibly to his virtue that brought it upon him. To do the man justice, he bore the whole of this persecution like an hero. He never tottered in his principles, nor swerved to the right or to the left from the noble cause of justice and humanity in which he had been engaged; and when your Lordships come to see his memorials, you will have reason to observe that his abilities are answerable to the dignity of his cause, and make him worthy of everything that he had the honor to suffer for it.

To cut short the thread of this shocking series of corruption, oppression, fraud, and chicanery, which lasted for upwards

of four years: Paterson remains without employment; the inhabitants of great provinces, whose substance and whose blood was sold by Mr. Hastings, remain without redress; and the purchaser, Debi Sing, that corrupt, iniquitous, and bloody tyrant, instead of being proceeded against by the Committee in a civil suit for retribution to the sufferers, is handed over to the false semblance of a trial, on a criminal charge, before a Mahometan judge,—an equal judge, however. The judge was Mahomed Reza Khân, his original patron, and the author of all his fortunes,—a judge who depends on him, as a debtor depends upon his creditor. To that judge is he sent, without a distinct charge, without a prosecutor, and without evidence. The next ships will bring you an account of his honorable acquittal.

I have stated before that I considered Mr. Hastings as responsible for the characters of the people he employed,—doubly responsible, if he *knew* them to be bad. I therefore charge him with putting in situations in which any evil may be committed persons of known evil characters.

My Lords, I charge him, as chief governor, with destroying the institutions of the country, which were designed to be, and ought to have been, controls upon such a person as Debi Sing.

An officer, called *dewan*, or steward of the country, had always been placed as a control on the farmer; but that no such control should in fact exist, that he, Debi Sing, should be let loose to rapine, slaughter, and plunder in the country, both offices were conferred on him. Did Mr. Hastings vest these offices

in him? No: but if Mr. Hastings had kept firm to the duties which the act of Parliament appointed him to execute, all the revenue appointments must have been made by him; but, instead of making them himself, he appointed Gunga Govind Sing to make them; and for that appointment, and for the whole train of subordinate villany which followed the placing iniquity in the chief seat of government, Mr. Hastings is answerable. He is answerable, I say, first, for destroying his own legal capacity, and, next, for destroying the legal capacity of the Council, not one of whom ever had, or could have, any true knowledge of the state of the country, from the moment he buried it in the gulf of mystery and of darkness, under that collected heap of villany, Gunga Govind Sing. From that moment he destroyed the power of government, and put everything into his hands: for this he is answerable.

The Provincial Councils consisted of many members, who, though they might unite in some small iniquities perhaps, could not possibly have concealed from the public eye the commission of such acts as these. Their very numbers, their natural competitions, the contentions that must have arisen among them, must have put a check, at least, to such a business. And therefore, Mr. Hastings having destroyed every check and control above and below, having delivered the whole into the hands of Gunga Govind Sing, for all the iniquities of Gunga Govind Sing he is responsible.

But he did not know Debi Sing, whom he employed. I read,

yesterday, and trust it is fresh in your Lordships' remembrance, that Debi Sing was presented to him by that set of tools, as they call themselves, who acted, as they themselves tell us they must act, entirely and implicitly under Gunga Govind Sing,—that is to say, by Gunga Govind Sing himself, the confidential agent of Mr. Hastings.

Mr. Hastings is further responsible, because he took a bribe of 40,000*l.* from some person in power in Dinagepore and Rungpore, the countries which were ravaged in this manner, through the hands of Gunga Govind Sing,—through the medium of that very person whom he had appointed to exercise all the authorities of the Supreme Council above and of all subordinate Councils below. Having, therefore, thus appointed a Council of tools in the hands of Gunga Govind Sing, at the expense of 62,000*l.* a year, to supersede all the English provincial authorities,—having appointed them for the purpose of establishing a bribe-factor general, a general receiver and agent of bribes through all that country, Mr. Hastings is responsible for all the consequences of it.

I have thought it necessary, and absolutely necessary it is, to state what the consequence of this clandestine mode of supplying the Company's exigencies was. Your Lordships will see that their exigencies are to be supplied by the ruin of the landed interest of a province, the destruction of the husbandmen, and the ruin of all the people in it. This is the consequence of a general bribe-broker, an agent like Gunga Govind Sing, superseding all the

powers and controls of government.

But Mr. Hastings has not only reduced bribery to a system of government practically, but theoretically. For when he despaired any longer of concealing his bribes from the penetrating eye of Parliament, then he took another mode, and declared, as your Lordships will see, that it was the best way of supplying the necessities of the East India Company in the pressing exigencies of their affairs; that thus a relief to the Company's affairs might be yielded, which, in the common, ostensible mode, and under the ordinary forms of government, and publicly, never would be yielded to them. So that bribery with him became a supplement to exaction.

The best way of showing that a theoretical system is bad is to show the practical mischiefs that it produces: because a thing may look specious in theory, and yet be ruinous in practice; a thing may look evil in theory, and yet be in its practice excellent. Here a thing in theory, stated by Mr. Hastings to be productive of much good, is in reality productive of all those horrible mischiefs I have stated. That Mr. Hastings well knew this appears from an extract of the Bengal Revenue Consultations, 21st January, 1785, a little before he came away.

Mr. Hastings says,—"I entirely acquit Mr. Goodlad of all the charges: he has disproved them. It was the duty of the accuser to prove them. Whatever crimes may be established against Rajah Debi Sing, it does not follow that Mr. Goodlad was responsible for them; and I so well know the character and abilities of Rajah

Debi Sing, that I can easily conceive that it was in his power both to commit the enormities which are laid to his charge, and to conceal the grounds of them from Mr. Goodlad, who had no authority but that of receiving the accounts and rents of the district from Rajah Debi Sing, and occasionally to be the channel of communication between him and the Committee."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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