

**THE GREAT  
PARLIAMENTARY  
BORE**

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The great parliamentary bore by Evans Bell

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**EVANS BELL**

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THE  
GREAT  
PARLIAMENTARY BORE.

BY  
MAJOR EVANS BELL,

LATE OF THE MADRAS STAFF CORPS.

AUTHOR OF "RETROSPECTS AND PROSPECTS OF INDIAN POLICY,"  
"THE MYSORE REVERSION," ETC.

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"What, fifty followers?  
Is it not well? What should you need of more?  
Yea, or so many? sith that both charge and danger  
Speak 'gainst so great a number? How, in one house,  
Should many people, under two commands,  
Hold amity? 'Tis hard; almost impossible."

SHAKESPEARE—*King Lear*.

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## PREFACE.

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IF India, by common consent of all political parties, is a great Parliamentary bore, the greatest possible Parliamentary bore must surely be the case of Prince Azeem Jah. I have endeavoured to prove in this volume, that, bore as it may be, we must learn to deal manfully and directly with this particular affair of the Carnatic Sovereignty, and with the general affairs of our Indian Empire. If the British Parliament and people care for none of these things, and leave them much longer to the absolute will and pleasure of professional rulers, the ultimate result will be disastrous. The control of the Secretary of State, advised and instructed by a Council of retired officials, though salutary, is generally insufficient for the reversal of decrees to which the Department is committed. A Minister must be more or less tied by precedents and pledges. The Nation, when its eyes are opened, will never hold itself debarred from a thorough change of policy by any scruple of broken routine or inconsistent records, by reverence for the wisdom of a Lord Harris or a Lord Lyveden, or by any regard for the reputation or feelings of eminently respectable Peers in or out of office.

In the debate on Mr. Smollett's motion in favour of Prince Azeem Jah's claims, on the 13th of June, 1864, Mr. Lowe expressed an opinion that if cases of this description were to be brought before Parliament, after they had "slumbered for years," — "if such elements of

uncertainty were allowed to be imported into the consideration of such questions,—there was danger of our Indian Empire being shaken to its foundation.\*

The foundations of our Indian Empire will never be shaken by an act of justice. If Mr. Lowe himself, and those who have hitherto taken a similar view of the question, will have the patience to peruse the following pages to the end, they will see that this case has never “slumbered” for a year, or for a day; that it is very unlikely to slumber for many years, either in Parliament, or in India; and that “the elements of uncertainty” can no longer be hidden, and will never disappear, till the difference is finally settled on an intelligible basis, either by mutual agreement, or by fair arbitration.

It has been said, and will be said again, that the House of Commons is an unfit tribunal for the discussion and decision of such questions as these. It may be so, but at present there is no other tribunal. There is no Court of Appeal against what are called “acts of state.”

Such of my readers as are not already acquainted with the Blue Books and the debates, will now have before them ample materials for satisfying themselves whether this important claim of succession to an inheritance is a fit subject for judicial inquiry, and whether it has ever received anything like judicial treatment or candid consideration. Let any one turn to the Papers of 1860, and ask himself whether he can imagine any barrister of decent character making use of the stuff he would find there, before the House of Lords or the Judicial Committee of Privy Council, addressing the Judges in the terms of Lord Harris’s or Lord Dalhousie’s Minutes. Yet no stronger advocacy has been employed, from first to last, to combat Prince Azeem Jah’s claim. Every successive Governor of Madras, Governor-General and Secretary of State, since those iniquitous pleas were recorded, has manifestly shrunk from repeating them in his own name. After inordinate delays, the Prince has received no reply to his protest save a simple refusal of

\* *Hansard*, vol. clxxv, p. 1668.



redress ; and to this day the grounds alleged for his disinheritance have never been officially communicated to him. He has been left to find them out from the successive Blue Books that have been printed for public information.

Thus it is not merely a denial of redress that is complained of, but the positive denial of a hearing before an open Court, in a purely judicial matter. No possible remedy can be devised for the flagrant failure of justice in this, and other similar cases, still occasionally recurring, and always liable to recur, except the institution by law of some such tribunal as that suggested in the following extract from a Minute by Sir Bartle Frere, then a Member of the Governor's-General's Council, dated the 30th August, 1860.

“ I trust I may not be misunderstood as saying a word against the right of appeal which every native of India ought to possess against any act of any Government functionary, however exalted. The exercise of such right of appeal will never, I am convinced, impair the true power of any Government of India such as we have had for generations past ; and I trust the day is not far distant when the Sovereign may have at hand a tribunal forming a part of Her Majesty's Privy Council, or possessing the same relation to the Crown, which may at command sit in judgment on questions of executive administration, whether appealed from or referred by the Government of India, and which may decide such questions with an authority which shall be conclusive with Parliament and the public, as well as against any possible appellant.”

“ I believe that such a tribunal, advising the Crown on the exercise of its Sovereign prerogative on Indian matters, and of necessity excluding all irregular interference, would greatly strengthen the Government of India ; but I am convinced that the present absence of system in dealing with Indian claims or Indian grievances in England, is fraught with great and immediate danger to the authority of Government, far beyond the admission of inconvenient burdens on our exhausted Treasury.”\*

The establishment of an Imperial judicature for the settlement of cases of disputed succession, of the doubtful interpretation of Treaties, and of other questions connected with the Princes of India beyond the province of municipal law, is the only cure for the well-intended iniquities of the Council-room, the inevitable scandals and

\* *Papers, Mysore Family*, 1861, p. 121.

abuses of Parliamentary agency, or of agency still more irregular, the despairing intrigues of ruined royalty, the puzzled exasperation of faithful feudatories.

The knowledge that an appeal might be made to a competent Court would at once put our Governors and Councillors into a judicial frame of mind, so that very little room would be left for appeals, and very few appeals would lead to a reversal of the original decision. On the other hand, the appeal to an Imperial tribunal by a Sovereign Prince is a distinct act of submission to Imperial supremacy. In the appointment of such a tribunal there would be no loss of authority, and there would be an infinite gain of moral power.

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