

INDIA AND LORD ELLENBOROUGH

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India and Lord Ellenborough by Anonymous

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ELLENBOROUGH**

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INDIA

Ch. Fox
AND

LORD ELLENBOROUGH.

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INDIA
AND
LORD ELLENBOROUGH.

INDIA is no longer the land of enchantment and romance —of exaggeration and wonder. It has been transferred from the realms of fancy to that of fact. For nearly a century its interests, real or supposed, have afforded topics for discussion to parliamentary orators and ephemeral writers. During that period, the readers of political journals have been at intervals excited by startling intelligence from the East; often of successes the most astonishing and unexpected, occasionally of reverses equally unlooked for. At one time our isle has been “frighted from its propriety” by denunciations of delinquency in the high places of India; at another, the tax-bearing people of Great Britain have been encouraged to look for relief to a country which the imagination pictured as the seat of riches, which no extravagance could exhaust, though exercised through as many millions of years as Hindoo chronology claims for the age of the earth. Gradually, however, the public mind settled down to more sober views, and at present there

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seems more danger of the value and importance of India being underrated, than of their being estimated at an undue height.

As to the extent of country properly comprehended under the name of India, opinions may differ. In conformity with popular acceptance, its boundaries may be assumed as follows:—On the north, the mountains which form for a part of the line the southern boundary of Nepal, and for the remainder, that of Chinese Tartary; on the south, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal; on the east, the territories constituting the Burman empire; and on the west, the river Indus for the more northern part, and the ocean for the southern. The country thus bounded extends into twenty-four degrees of latitude, and as many of longitude, and is estimated to contain a million and a quarter of square miles. Much of the land within this vast area is to be classed among the most fertile in the world, and it is overspread by an active and industrious population, the number of which cannot be reckoned at less than a hundred and fifty millions. The soil and climate are peculiarly suited to the production of various commodities, some of which are of high price, and some in universal demand. Among the latter may be mentioned cotton and sugar. Cotton might be produced in India to any extent that even the devouring appetite of the manufacturing districts of England and Scotland is likely to claim, and sugar to meet the demands of the whole world. The larger portion of this great and rich country renders homage to the Queen of Great Britain, and much of the remainder, though under princes nominally independent, is practically subject to the British Government.

For three centuries England has been endeavouring to extend its colonial dependencies. Myriads of Englishmen

have quitted their native shores for the desolate wastes of distant climes, there to extend the foundations of their country's greatness, and raise new out-posts for its maintenance. The reign of George III. witnessed the violent severance of the better portion of these offshoots from the parent stock. The North American colonies dissolved their connection with the land whence they had sprung; and the country which had previously constituted a main arm of the strength of Great Britain was thenceforward to become permanently a commercial rival, sometimes a political enemy. But the loss which was sustained in the West was compensated in the East. About the time when indications of the approaching conflict with America began to appear, the English in India exchanged the character of tenants of circumscribed factories for that of lords of extensive provinces. At the time when, after an inglorious war, the reluctant consent of the British sovereign was extorted to the acknowledgment of American independence, some additions had been made to the first acquisition, and before the close of his reign the British were paramount in India, exercising positive rule over the better part of the country, holding military possession of a portion of the rest, and overawing, by their predominant power and influence, the whole. It would be idle to discuss whether India is a colony or not. If not a colony, it is something better. If it be desirable to occupy distant lands in the name of England; slowly and laboriously, and at vast expense, to establish civilized communities in dependence upon the country which sends them forth, how much more desirable must it be to receive the transfer of a country, not only of immense extent, but of almost unbounded capacity of production, the natural fertility of which has been increased by the sedulous culture of ages, and where nothing is

wanting but that reformation in the "spirit of man," and that security to life, property, and industry, which European rule and that alone is able to give. "Ships, colonies, and commerce," were the objects declared to be specially sought by the man to whose genius and good fortune Europe, with one exception, succumbed. That exception was found in the country which, small in its extent, and limited in its natural resources, was mighty in the spirit of its sons, by whose courage and enterprise it had spread its limbs into every clime and covered every sea with its ships, richly freighted to meet the wants of every people. Napoleon, at least, understood the value of India; and happy would he have been to have wrested this precious possession from the "nation of shop-keepers," whom he at once despised, envied, hated, and feared.

India gives to Great Britain a vast accession of political power in reference to the other nations of Europe. If it were lost, the amount of loss would be incalculable and irretrievable. There is no empire on the opposite side of the world to be gained to compensate the privation, as was the case when the American colonies of Great Britain renounced their allegiance. If the British possessions of India were again over-run by native powers, the loss of them would be deeply felt; if transferred, in whole or in part, to any European rival, it would be felt still more deeply, inasmuch as that rival, whoever it might be, would gain to the extent of our loss. The loss in reputation would be greater even than that of dominion, and Great Britain would sink in the scale of European nations from a first to a third or fourth rate power. In this humble position, moreover, we must not expect to pursue our trade with India as now. The restoration of native governments would restore all the uncertainty, the vexation, the tyranny, and extortion

which they were wont to exercise towards merchants, and which they still exercise wherever they are not controlled or overawed by British influence. If the territory lost to England passed into European hands, our prospects would scarcely be better, seeing the almost universal jealousy of our trade which pervades Europe, and the wide-spreading confederacies which are formed against it. India now receives annually upwards of £5,000,000 in value of our manufactures. How much would be taken if our political connection were severed? India now affords employment to upwards of 200,000 tons of our shipping. What amount of tonnage would be thus occupied were the power of Great Britain not paramount in that country? The civil and military services of India open honourable sources of employment to many thousand Englishmen, all of them finding therein respectable means of subsistence, and some of them returning to their native land with decent competency for future years. Besides this, India remits annually a tribute of £3,200,000, to meet charges of various kinds defrayed at home. Among these charges are the dividends on East-India Stock, and the interest on East-India Bonds. Were India lost, what would be the fate of these dividends and this interest? Either the claimants must lose their property, or the nation must take the charge upon itself. Would the creditors of India be satisfied with the former branch of the alternative? Would the people of England, already complaining heavily of the pressure of taxation, and recently extricated from heavy financial embarrassment only by the re-establishment of an impost peculiarly offensive, and on that account always understood to be a special reserve for periods of war—would the people of England, thus taxed, thus relieved, be likely to submit to the latter? Would the millions who are *not* creditors

of India, but who would share in the common evils resulting from its loss, if lost unhappily it should be, be willing to take upon themselves the additional loss of the hundreds who *are* creditors? This is a question which, when the good government of India is concerned, should, in common prudence, never be absent from the minds of those who have a direct pecuniary interest in maintaining the existing relations between that country and England.

Besides the holders of East-India Stock and the bond creditors of the East-India Company, there is another class of persons interested in like manner in maintaining the peace and security of India in dependance upon Great Britain—the creditors under the various loans raised by the Indian Government at various times for various public objects. Part of these creditors are natives of India, or residents in that country, but part also are European born, and resident here. The interest upon their capital invested in India is remitted through private sources, and its amount is not readily ascertainable; it is, however, large. To the head of private remittances, must also be added the savings of individuals in India sent or brought home for investment, and the whole must be combined with the sums remitted for public purposes, before we can know the total amount of the wealth which India annually renders to her European protector in return for the advantages bestowed on her by the connection. Politically, commercially, and financially, then, the safety of India is an object of paramount importance to Great Britain. Territory, power, and wealth are the adjuncts of the connection, and unless infatuation, like that which lost America, prevail, every effort will be made to preserve it. Territory equal in extent to Europe, if the dominions of Russia, Sweden, and Denmark be excluded; power rivalling that of Rome in its