

had swallowed more, and the support of French prisoners had taken another large slice. In fact, the revenues of Madras, never very large, had not nearly sufficed to cover the expenditure which the possession of Southern India had entailed upon the Company. Then, again, a very great and a very useless expenditure had been forced upon the Madras Government by the Crown by the despatch (July 1762) from that presidency of a force of two thousand men to capture Manilla, capital of the Philippine Islands. Manilla was captured in 1762, and restored to Spain in 1763, so that Madras had been quit with the glory and the expense.

This combined expenditure, balanced only by receipts just beginning to flow in from Bengal, afforded no solid foundation for the demand made by the proprietary body for a large increase of dividends. It is the way of the world that proprietors should demand, and it is often unfortunate that they possess the power to dictate. It was especially so in the present case. Notwithstanding the opposition of the majority of the directors, the proprietors in 1766 raised the dividend from six per cent. to ten per cent. The reader will know how unjustifiable was the increase. Still more so was that decreed by the same body the following year, from ten to twelve and a half per cent. The evil effects of this change were felt immediately. The First Minister of the Crown, the Duke of Grafton, had strongly condemned the rapacity of the proprietors in increasing the dividend. He now prepared to make them pay for their rapacity.

He caused to be passed one Act which decreed that dividends should be taken only by ballot in general courts summoned specially for that purpose, and that no dividend should exceed ten per cent.; another, which compelled the Company, in consideration of their being permitted to hold the territorial revenues of India for five years, to pay annually four hundred thousand pounds into the public exchequer.

In this contest the friends of Clive had taken the honest view—the view that the dividends should not be unjustifiably increased. In the eyes of the rapacious proprietary, Clive suffered for this honest action. He suffered still more from the bitter vindictiveness of his enemies.

The crusade which Clive had made against corruption in Bengal, the consequent dismissal and forced resignations of several prominent officials, had made him many bitter foes. The dismissed and retired officials were all of them men who had accumulated large fortunes in India, chiefly by the means which Clive now condemned. They returned to England with bitter hatred in their hearts, resolved to devote their lives, their fortunes, their every energy, to the ruin of the man who had denounced their illicit proceedings. For this purpose they bought largely East India Stock, and, as every purchaser of five hundred pounds of stock carried a vote, they soon were able to form a minority formidable in numbers, and which, by uniting to it the old declared enemies of Clive, and the waverers, might soon hope to become a majority. Before Clive returned to

England, an opportunity was afforded to them of testing the strength of such a union.

When the members of the corrupt clique had reached England the Court of Directors resolved, upon the advice of the Crown and Company's lawyers, to bring them to trial for having received presents from natives after the Court's prohibitory order had reached them. Against this decision of the Court the inculpat<sup>d</sup> officials resolved to appeal to the proprietors; and, that their appeal might be successful, they determined to take advantage of the hostile feeling which was known to exist against the Directors on the subject of the increased dividends. When, then, in May 1767, the majority of the Court of Proprietors voted, in opposition to the strong view expressed by the majority of the Court of Directors, the increase of the dividend from ten to twelve and a half per cent., the members of the corrupt clique took advantage of the excitement caused by the action of the majority of the Directors—known to be friends and adherents of Clive—and caused the question to be put that the prosecutions which had been instituted should be dismissed. They carried their point.

Two months later, 14th July, Clive landed in England. In the India House, thanks to the two causes I have stated, the tide was just beginning to turn. Ostensibly he was well received. The King and Queen admitted him to private audiences, and accorded to him a gracious welcome. The Court of Directors were not at all backward in their desire to do honour to one who had more than fulfilled all their expectations.

They, too, received him in full conclave\* immediately after his audience with the Sovereigns, thanked him through their chairman for his splendid achievements, and immediately convened a general court to confirm the resolution recently passed by the Court of Proprietors to the effect that the jaghír granted by Mír J'afar should be continued to Lord Clive and his heirs for a further period of ten years beyond the date to which it had been already granted. At the general court the resolution was carried by a unanimous vote.

The feeling between Clive and the Court was not, however, really as cordial as it should have been. Clive was extremely sensitive on the subject of the grant which had been made him by Mír J'afar, and he resented the manner in which the account of that grant was thrust prominently in the foreground whilst the actual revenues of the territories he had acquired for the Company were studiously concealed. To authorise for ten years an income of some thirty thousand pounds a year from estates bringing in five millions is one thing; to authorise a similar amount from estates bringing in half a million is another. In the first case the reward is not disproportionate either to the total revenues, or to the services of the man who obtained those revenues; in the second it is excessive. Now, there can be no doubt but that Clive in his second administration had procured for the Company a revenue which would eventually be counted

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\* At the India Office he found a statue of himself, another of General Lawrence, and a third of Sir G. Pocock, larger than life, which had been executed in his absence.



by millions. In private the Court admitted this ; but they declined to publish their opinion lest the too eager rapacity of the proprietors should be thereby excited. Their disinclination was a result of the system which placed the affairs of a distant empire in the hands of a joint-stock company. It did not the less annoy and alienate Clive, who believed that by their action he was made to pose as the receiver of a reward out of all proportion to the revenues from which it was paid.

It is much to be regretted that on his return to England Clive did not, for a time at all events, withdraw altogether from public affairs. The mental contest he had waged during the period immediately preceding has been graphically described by Sir John Malcolm : “ For three years his mind had been kept painfully on the stretch. He had been compelled, almost singly, to combat a whole settlement, and especially the highest portion of it, in arms against him, eager to thwart and defeat his plan of reform ; he had borne the whole weight of the resentment of the officers of the army, whom he subdued by his force of mind and unrivalled reputation ; he had paid off a large portion of the Company’s debt, had added an immense sum to their revenue, and had supplied them with an unparalleled investment ; he had left their possessions in the East, as he believed, rich and flourishing and in peace, and had returned with ruined health and broken constitution. In all his trials, and in very painful circumstances, under which most men would have sunk, he had supported himself by the

strong consciousness that he was doing his duty, and meriting the applause of his own employers and of the world. It is not surprising that when he thought himself deserted, and believed he was the object of the jealousy and slight of the very persons he had so illustriously served, his disappointment and resentment should be extreme, and that his sensitive and exasperated mind should almost doubt the existence of human gratitude." A mind strained to the point of being almost unhinged by unintermittent trial is unfit, for the moment, to grapple with the rude realities of the world. And certainly those which Lord Clive encountered on his return were rude enough to have tested the soundest mental organisation. For him, invalided, worn out, nervous, unhinged, the immediate contest could have but one result. He might defeat his enemies, but the struggle would cost him his life.

The storm which, at a later period, burst over his head, nursed alike by the corrupt speculators whom he had exposed, by the popular fancy existing of the idea of the wealth he was said to have acquired by robbery and fraud, and, it must be added, by his own ostentatious display, has been painted in striking language by the late Lord Macaulay.

After describing the effect produced by his ostentatious magnificence, the eloquent historian continues. "But this was not the worst. Black stories, of which the greater part were pure inventions, were circulated touching his conduct in the East. He had to bear the whole odium, not only of those bad acts to which he had once or twice stooped, but of all the bad acts

of all the English in India, of bad acts committed when he was absent, nay, of bad acts which he had manfully opposed and severely punished. The very abuses against which he had waged an honest, resolute, and successful war, were laid to his account. He was, in fact, regarded as the personification of all the vices and weaknesses which the public, with or without reason, ascribed to the English adventurers in Asia. We have ourselves heard old men, who knew nothing of his history, but who still retained the prejudices conceived in their youth, talk of him as an incarnate fiend. Johnson always held this language. Brown, whom Clive employed to lay out his pleasure grounds, was enraged to see in the house of his noble employer a chest which had once been filled with gold from the treasury of Murshidábád, and could not understand how the conscience of the criminal could suffer him to sleep with such an object so near to his bed-chamber. The peasantry of Surrey looked with mysterious horror on the stately house which was rising at Claremont, and whispered that the great wicked lord had ordered the walls to be made so thick in order to keep out the devil who would one day carry him away bodily."

Such was the storm which brought to an untimely grave the man who had laid the foundation of our Indian Empire. It did not burst suddenly. Its advent was gradual. Clive, who had scented it on his arrival, thought he had conjured it away when, after having made arrangements for the return of himself and six of his relatives and friends to Parliament at the

general election, which was to take place the following year, he set out (January 1768) with Lady Clive and a small party to visit Paris and the south of France. Certainly, at that period, he had still confidence in himself, confidence in the future. No vision of general unpopularity crossed his mind. He spoke and wrote like a strong man, suffering from overwork, but conscious that rest would enable him to return stronger than before; strong enough to support the directors, who, without his aid, must fall;\* strong enough, in a word, to impress his policy on the India Office and on the country.

Well would it have been for Clive if he had listened to the advice of his physicians, and passed a whole year in rest and relaxation on the Continent. The stay of nearly eight months which he made there benefited him greatly, so much, indeed, that he believed his health completely restored. Not so his medical advisers. They urged him in the month of August to stay through the autumn and the coming winter. He would not. He panted for the strife of parties, for the influence, the power, the consideration,

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\* "With regard to the Court of Directors," he wrote (19th January 1768) to a friend at Madras, "I can only say they are universally despised and hated; will certainly be pushed hard next April, and, if I and my friends do not support them, must fall. Their ignorance and obstinacy are beyond conception." Again, on the 9th February of the same year, writing to Mr. Verelst, he says. "Let me tell you, in secret, that I have the King's command to lay before him my ideas of the Company's affairs both at home and abroad, with a promise of his countenance and protection in everything I might attempt for the good of the nation and the Company."

which pre-eminence in such strife gives to a really capable man. He felt within him the ability, and he longed to put it in action. He would not wait, then, till the cure of his malady had been entirely effected, but returned prematurely to England.

During his absence, he, and the six relatives and friends whom he had nominated,\* had been returned to Parliament. Shortly afterwards he took his seat in that then august assembly as a supporter of Mr. Grenville.

The growing personal opposition to Lord Clive amongst the proprietors of East India Stock made itself very sensibly felt after his return from the continent. It is true the stings were the stings of gnats, but they were envenomed and unceasing. Had his health been good, Clive would have pushed them contemptuously aside. But, still irritable from acute nervous tension, he could not bear them with patience. It required all the exertions of his friends to prevent him from descending into the arena to answer a pamphlet written by Sir Robert Fletcher!

A few months later an event occurred which produced a marked effect upon his parliamentary, and an effect even greater upon his personal, career. In November 1770 the leader to whom Clive had attached himself in the House of Commons, George Grenville, died. The party which he had led, and which his

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\* Lord Clive was returned for Shrewsbury; Richard Clive for Montgomery; William and George Clive for Bishop's Castle; John Walsh for Worcester; Henry Strachey for Pontefract; Edmund Maskelyne for Crickdale.

influence had kept together, almost immediately dissolved. Some of its members, amongst them its leading lawyer, Mr. Wedderburn, a staunch friend of Clive, joined the ministry of which Lord North in the January immediately preceding had become the head. Others joined the opposition, led by Lord Rockingham. It would have been well for Clive if he and his friends had, at this conjuncture, taken a decided part. To remain the head of a "Clive party," numbering seven or eight, was to insure worse than isolation; it was to court the hostility of the two great parties which divided the House. Vulnerable as he was, exposed to violent attacks from men whom he knew to be unscrupulous and thirsting for revenge, he deliberately left himself—to use a phrase which as a soldier he would have understood—in the air, not only without support, but liable to be crushed by an overwhelming superiority of numbers. His apologist, Sir John Malcolm, has accounted for this political blunder by imagining that possibly Clive wished, before definitively making up his mind, to ascertain the line which each party was disposed to take on Indian affairs. The reason, applied to the conduct of such a man as Clive, will not stand the test of examination. If Clive could not have dictated the Indian policy of the party to which he might have heartily allied himself, he could at least have greatly influenced it!

There are some indications just prior to this period that his mind had lost the elasticity, the hope in the future, the resolute confidence, which had characterised

him in all the great crises of his life. It may have been one of the consequences of the loss of power. A greatly gifted man who has wielded absolute authority, is seldom able to school himself to take a great part in a parliamentary system. The Marquess Wellesley, splendid administrator as he was, proved himself, after his return from India, an impossible cabinet minister. He dictated to his colleagues in Downing Street as he had dictated to his Council in India. The same might with truth be said of the late Earl of Ellenborough. Both these statesmen had greatly governed. They could not divest themselves of the sense of greatness which their position had inspired and fall back into the routine of clerkdom. The alternative system of donning the garb of the agitator had not, fortunately, been invented in their days. After some futile attempts to accommodate themselves to constitutional governments, they took refuge in isolation. A giant in isolation feels no sympathy with the policy of dwarfs!

In this manner only is it possible to explain the feelings of Clive at this period. Shut out from the exercise of supreme power, he could not lend himself to serve a party whose policy seemed to him petty, undecided, and inadequate. Thence it was that he lost gradually that hope in the future of the country which is the sustaining power of the practical politician. Even a year prior to Mr. Grenville's death this feeling was beginning to creep over him. His correspondence at this period proves that he was fast losing faith in the ability of the mother country to retain

her colonies and foreign possessions; that he beheld with dismay the strides towards independence taken by North America and Ireland, and that he doubted even of India.

Meanwhile affairs in India were not progressing satisfactorily. The monetary returns were poor; a war with Haidar Alí in southern India was shaking English power there to its foundation; whilst in the India Office the enemies of Clive were gaining with every annual election new power and new influence. In 1769 it required the utmost exertion on the part of Lord Clive to prevent the nomination of Mr. Vansittart, formerly his friend, but since become his implacable enemy, to the post of Governor-General. By constituting a council of supervisors and by causing to be associated with Vansittart two of his own devoted friends, the Colonel Forde of Machhlipatanam and Biderra, and Mr. Scrafton, he had minimised this evil. The "Aurora" frigate which conveyed these gentlemen to India having been lost with all on board, the government of the Presidency was then, on the recommendation of Lord Clive, conferred (1771) upon a man who as an administrator at least equalled himself, and who became subsequently even more obnoxious to an influential parliamentary party—the gifted but unfortunate Warren Hastings.

The unrest of Lord Clive's mind at this period is demonstrated by the wish, expressed in all his correspondence, to retire from a scene in which "anarchy and confusion" appeared to him to ride rampant; and by his clinging, notwithstanding, to the skirts of the



political world. He expresses his determination to retire from Parliament, and yet remains in it; he records his sense of the weakness of the politicians and the inefficiency of their measures; yet occasionally there peeps out the longing of the man, who had been the "master of millions," to dictate his own policy. This is apparent in the eagerness with which, in May 1771, he welcomed a request made to him by Mr. Wedderburn to confer with Lord Rochford, one of the principal secretaries of State, regarding the affairs of India. This request led to communications with the Prime Minister, Lord North.

This apparent abandonment of the isolated position which he had till then retained, alarmed the party which had then the upper hand in the India Office, and which was composed of and supported by the bitter personal enemies of Lord Clive, and they resolved without delay to strike the blow which they had carefully prepared. Just a fortnight before the Parliament of that year (1772) was to meet, they transmitted to Clive an official letter informing him that papers had reached the Court of Directors in which he (Lord Clive) was charged with having been a party to the mismanagement of the Company's affairs in Bengal; and that if he had any observations to make upon such papers, copies of which were transmitted, the Court would be happy to receive the same as expeditiously as might suit his convenience. Lord Clive, scenting the coming storm, replied in a short and dignified letter, addressed to the Court of Directors. In that letter he referred to the records

of the Company, "where the whole of my conduct is stated," for a sufficient confutation of the charges transmitted to him. In conclusion he expressed his supposition that, if any part of his conduct had been injurious to the service, contradictory to his arrangements with the Company, or even mysterious to the Court, four years and a half since his arrival in England would not have elapsed before the Court's duty would have impelled it to call him to account. This letter received no reply.

A fortnight later, Parliament met (22nd January). A paragraph in the speech from the Throne indicated the intention of the Ministry to introduce a measure "to provide new laws" "for supplying defects or remedying abuses" in the administration of India. Clive had always advocated the introduction of such new laws, and he might well imagine that his recent correspondence with the Prime Minister had instigated the measure. He was disabused of this idea when, on the 30th March following, his bitter enemy Mr. Sullivan, who, besides being Deputy Chairman of the Court, was likewise a member of the House of Commons, rose in his place, and introduced a bill "for the better regulation of the affairs of the East India Company and of their servants in India, and for the due administration of justice in Bengal." The reforms proposed by this bill were for the most part of a very useful character. For many of them Lord Clive himself had incessantly contended. But in the speech which accompanied the introduction of the measure, Lord Clive could not fail to read an

impeachment of himself before the great council of the nation. In that speech Mr. Sullivan earnestly contended that the admitted evils of the past were due to the little power 'possessed' by the Court of Directors to punish their servants in India; and that many of them were traceable to the conduct of former governors. The speech, whilst dealing in generalities, was skilfully constructed so as to direct the attention of the House to the principal events of Lord Clive's administrations.

Lord Clive replied. He began by stating that he stood virtually charged with having been the cause of the present melancholy state of affairs in Bengal; that as long as that impression remained his opinion on the matter before the House could produce no effect; that he should set himself therefore to remove it. He then entered into an elaborate defence of his second administration; pointed out the real evils which he had encountered and crushed; that it was the vermin who had been removed from the Augean stable, which he had cleansed, who had occasioned the public papers to teem with scurrility and abuse against him ever since his return to England; he then met the individual charges one after another; proved conclusively that in that second administration he had had regard only to the honour of his country and the true interests of the Company; that he had been guilty of no acts of oppression, unless the bringing of offenders to justice might be deemed such; that he had not suffered those under him to commit acts of violence, oppression, or extortion;

that his influence had always been exerted on the side of right and justice; and that he had returned to England a poorer man than when he had left it. His defence was, in fact, complete; and had he, on concluding it, at once resumed his seat, it is probable that the impression he had made would have prevented the resuscitation of charges which the House clearly saw were utterly devoid of foundation.

But, great general as he was in the field, Clive possessed neither the experience nor the tact which are often the most powerful weapons of a Parliamentary orator. He made a mistake on this occasion, from the commission of which, on the field of battle he would have effectually restrained himself. Like Prince Rupert, he was not content with routing the enemy, he galloped so far in their pursuit that on his return he found that the victory had been snatched from his grasp. The conduct of the India Office and, to a lesser extent, the conduct of the Ministry, had embittered the last three years of his existence. He had stored up in his mind all the sins of omission and commission of his professing friends in power, and he was longing for an opportunity to fling their delinquencies at their heads. Such an opportunity had now arrived. He saw that in the successful vindication he had made of his own conduct he had gained the ear of the House; that the members were in the humour to listen to him. The temptation was too great to be withstood.

Receiving, in response to the expression of a fear that he should weary the House were he to proceed

further, sympathising encouragement to go on, Clive dashed at once into his charges against the Court of Directors. The abuses in India he traced to the policy which, by withholding from the servants of the Company adequate salaries, had exposed them to temptations which it was impossible for human nature to resist. He dwelt then in impassioned terms on the notorious misconduct of the Directors, on their ignorance of India, on the manner in which their maladministration had caused, and was causing, the destruction of the inland trade of Bengal; and he denounced the constitution of a Court which, elected annually, was at the mercy of a court of proprietors, the interest of whom in India consisted entirely in the punctual receipt of large dividends on East India stock.

Having by this attack made an enemy of every proprietor of East India stock in the House of Commons, Clive did not spare the Government. He denounced its members for the neglect with which they were treating a most important dependency of the Crown by leaving it to be administered without proper supervision by such a body as the Court of Directors: "If the administration had done their duty, we should not now have had a speech from the the Throne intimating the necessity of Parliamentary interposition to save our possessions in India from impending ruin."

Such was the speech. Able as it was, and true as were its arguments, it weakened rather than strengthened the position of the speaker. Ministers

of the Crown like to consider themselves infallible. They resent open attacks upon their shortcomings. It was truly remarked by the best friends of Lord Clive that "he had never spoken with greater eloquence, never with a more evil tendency as regarded himself."

From that evening may be dated the extremely bitter persecution to which Lord Clive was subjected; the growing unpopularity so eloquently described by Lord Macaulay,† the unjustifiable attacks upon him for conduct of which he not only had not been guilty, but which he had repressed and condemned in others. These attacks, pressed on a man whose nature was becoming daily more sensitive, and whose constitution was rapidly failing, caused him infinite torture. He bore himself bravely, however, under the trial, and to the last boldly confronted his foes.

When the bill was laid upon the table of the House (30th April) Colonel Burgoyne moved the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the nature, state, and condition of the East India Company and of the British affairs in the East Indies. The motion was carried, and the thirty-one members were appointed. Amongst these were Lord Clive and his friend Mr. Strachey, and Governor Johnstone, the brother of the Johnstone who had been the principal factor in negotiating the sale of the *Súbahdárí* on the death of *Mír J'afar*. The nomination of this Committee caused Mr. Sullivan's bill to be dropped.

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\* Gleig's *Life of Lord Clive*.

† Page 448-9.

The Committee began its labours by directing, on the motion of Governor Johnstone, an inquiry into the conduct of individuals who, whether in the civil or military service of the Company, had amassed great wealth in India. This inquiry, unanimously agreed to, virtually placed Lord Clive upon his trial.

In the examination to which Lord Clive and other witnesses were subject before this Committee, the connection of the former with Bengal from the beginning of 1757 to the close of 1760, and again from 1765 to 1767, was rigidly scrutinised. The negotiations with Siráju'd daulah, the affair of Amichand, the presents received from Mír J'afar, the grant of the jaghír, the legacy, the regulations regarding trade, and every matter bearing more or less directly upon these main headings, were brought up, virtually as criminal charges. The prosecution, for so it was except in name, was conducted with all the ability which the concentrated hatred of the enemies of the intended victim could command. Lord Clive himself was subjected to a cross-examination of a most minute and searching character. He was questioned not merely as to what he had done, but as to the motives which prompted his action, the ends at which he had been aiming; whilst his enemies endeavoured directly, and, when a direct purpose could under no circumstances be imagined, by insinuation, to prove that in everything he had been actuated by corrupt or selfish motives. His very accusers sat in judgment upon him, for the hostile sentiments of almost every member of the Committee were not concealed.

In these trying circumstances Lord Clive displayed a dignity and a resolution that could not fail to command respect. His bearing was the bearing of a proud man, standing on his right, assailed by men whom he had righteously baffled. He admitted and justified all that he had done. His treatment of Amichand and his attaching of Admiral Watson's name to the treaty were necessitated, he argued, by the state of affairs. He believed that Mr. Lushington had been authorised by the Admiral to sanction the signature of his name. Under similar circumstances he would act similarly. He admitted the receipt of enormous sums from Mír J'afar, but protested that no obligation of morality or public faith had been thereby violated. Having become, by the victory of Plassey, the arbiter of the situation, with a prince dependent upon his pleasure, an opulent city at his feet, its greatest bankers contending for his smiles, he himself walking through vaults, piled on either hand with gold and jewels, thrown open to him alone, "I stand at this moment," he exclaimed, "astonished at my own moderation!"

At last the Committee made its reports. The first report contained the evidence taken regarding the first administration of Lord Clive; the second referred to the causes which led to the war with Mír Kásim under his successor. These reports were presented to Parliament on the 26th May, printed, and circulated throughout the kingdom in the hope that the feeling they would create against Clive would lead to his inevitable disgrace. But the



enemies of Clive had acted like the ostrich. It is true that the publication of the reports did influence the mind against Clive and against others who had taken money from native princes, but it told with far greater effect against the authors of the prosecution, the Court of Directors and their friends. It convicted them not *only* of misgovernment, but of an inaptitude for affairs, an ignorance, and a want of grasp which ruined them in the minds of all intelligent observers.

Amongst a large class, indeed, Clive did not suffer by the publication of his evidence. His manly bearing, his self-assertion, his very admissions conciliated their esteem. Nothing had been proved against him which he had not previously avowed. The miscarriage, then, of the clique which had whispered the certainty of disclosures more fatal to his fame as an honest man than any of which the world had been cognisant, produced an effect the reverse of that which his enemies had hoped for. The King took the lead in the manifestation of this change of intelligent public feeling in his favour. Three weeks after the reports of the Committee had been laid upon the table of the House of Commons Clive was nominated and installed as a Knight of the Bath. The Prime Minister, Lord North, and the Secretary of State, Lord Rochfort, seemed to follow in the same direction. The Lord-Lieutenancy of the county of Salop having fallen vacant, Lord Rochfort, with the approval of the Prime Minister, caused it to be intimated to Clive that if the office were agreeable to him they would have

pleasure in submitting his name to the King. The result was that on the 9th October Clive kissed hands for the Lieutenancy of Salop, and in the December following for that of Montgomeryshire.

These civilities renewed the friendly relations of Clive with the Cabinet, and in the winter of that year he drew up and submitted to it the outlines of a measure which had for its object a complete reform in the home-administration of India and the transfer of the territorial sovereignty to the Crown.

But his enemies, though baffled, were not yet beaten. What their action was, will be presently related. To the right understanding of it I must first show how the proceedings of the House of Commons tended to give them the opportunity they desired.

When the session of 1773 opened, the Select Committee, of which Colonel Burgoyne was Chairman, resumed its labours. But Lord North at the same time asked and obtained the appointment of a Committee of Secrecy, to be composed of thirteen members, with power to examine the books of the Company and to report to the House upon the state of debts and credits set forth therein, as well as on the system of management generally. The Committee was further directed to state whether or not, in their judgment, the Court of Directors should be allowed to act as, in their despair, they had proposed to act; viz. to send six gentlemen to India to supervise their affairs in that country.

Then was presented the remarkable circumstance

of two committees sitting at the same time, the animus of one being directed to compass the ruin of Lord Clive; the animus of the other being the destruction of the East India Company. The double inquisition resulted, as might have been expected, in a fiasco. The Select Committee proved numberless instances of corrupt reception of money from native chieftains; the Secret Committee convicted the Company of the grossest mismanagement. Despairing of untying, without a labour for which he was constitutionally unfitted, the Gordian knot, Lord North made over the papers of both committees to his attorney-general, Sir John Thurlow, who undertook to devote the Easter recess to examining them, and to make a proposition afterwards. He was true to his word. On the close of the Easter holidays he attended a meeting of the Cabinet summoned specially for the purpose, and informed its members that he had found the affairs of the Company to be so involved, alike from the misconduct of their servants and their own maladministration, that he could see no alternative but to pass through Parliament a measure which should confiscate to the public all the sums acquired by the servants of the Crown and of the Company in India, under the denomination of presents from Indian princes, on the plea that inasmuch as those presents had been obtained by the military force of the country, they belonged properly to the State. The proposal was, as might have been expected, ill-received by many members of the Ministry, and the Cabinet broke up without coming to a decision.

It was, nevertheless, this proposition of Sir John Thurlow's which formed the basis of the new attack against Lord Clive. After the re-assembly of Parliament, Burgoyne, Sullivan, and their friends had resumed attacks which Clive had no difficulty in repulsing—with loss to his accusers. But on the 10th May, Colonel Burgoyne, who a month previously had brought up the third and fourth reports of his committee, and who, in the interval, had been informed of Thurlow's proposal, made his grand demonstration. This took the form of three resolutions, which he proposed to the House to pass. These resolutions ran thus:—First, "that all acquisitions made under the influence of a military force, or by treaty with foreign princes, did of right belong to the State." Secondly, "that to appropriate acquisitions so made to the private emolument of persons entrusted with any civil or military power of the State is illegal." Thirdly, "that very great sums of money, and other valuable property, had been acquired in Bengal from princes and others of that country by persons entrusted with the civil and military powers of the State by means of such powers; which sums of money and valuable property have been appropriated to the private use of such persons."

It would have been difficult to make charges more direct against Lord Clive. Every line in the resolutions pointed at him. If doubt had been possible, Colonel Burgoyne took care to dispel every shadow of it in his speech introducing the resolutions. In that speech all the delinquencies, real

and imaginary, of the victor of Plassey, were emphasised with a bitterness not to be surpassed. Tracing all the misfortunes which had befallen the Company to the treasonable compact which deposed Siráju'd daulah and placed Mír J'afar, on his seat, and condemning the "black perfidy" which alone had rendered such a policy possible, Burgoyne denounced the treatment of Amíchand, the forging of the name of Admiral Watson; the subsequent agreement with Mír J'afar which had procured enormous sums, extorted, he said, by military force, under the guise of presents, to the leading servants of the Company in Bengal. The proceedings of the second administration were dealt with in the same bitter and unsparing manner. Before he sat down the orator declared to the House that if the resolutions should meet with their approbation he would not stop there, but would follow them up with others, his object being to compel those who had acquired sums of money in the manner he had stated to make a full and complete restitution.

I pass over the speeches in support of and in opposition to the resolutions, to notice that delivered by Lord Clive. Sketching at some length his own career, especially that part of it under the review of the House, Clive claimed a title to the gratitude of his country. The rewards and honours he had received he balanced against the services he had rendered. To be exposed to calumny and slander was always the lot of a man who had rooted out abuses. The throne itself had not been free from

similar attacks. If such charges were encouraged in high places able men would be disinclined to take upon themselves posts of responsibility and danger. He then replied once again to Burgoyne's charges; defended the legality of accepting presents under the circumstances of the time; and concluded by declaring that if the record of his services at the India Office, if the defence twice made in that House, if the approbation he had already met with, did not constitute an answer to the attack made upon him, he could make no other.

The resolutions were, however, carried. Burgoyne then proceeded to fulfil the promise he had made to follow them up. On the 17th May he brought forward the following resolutions: "That it appears to this House that the Right Honourable Robert Lord Clive, Baron of Plassey, in the kingdom of Ireland, about the time of the deposition of Sirájú'd daulah; and the establishment of Mír J'afar on the masnad, through the influence of the powers with which he was entrusted, as member of the Select Committee and Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces, did obtain and possess himself of two lakhs of rupees as Commander-in-Chief, a further sum of two lakhs and eighty thousand rupees as member of the Select Committee, and a further sum of sixteen lakhs or more, under the denomination of a private donation; which sums, amounting together to twenty lakhs and eighty thousand rupees, were of value, in English money, of two hundred and thirty-four thousand pounds; and that in so doing the said Robert Clive

abused the power with which he was entrusted, to the evil example of the servants of the public, and to the dishonour and detriment of the State."

In his speech in support of this resolution, Burgoyne went over the same ground he had traversed in his previous oration, and he concluded by begging the House to put aside all partiality and prejudice; to sanction an act of national justice; "to imitate the first example of antiquity, and strike, like Manlius, when the justice of the State requires it."

Clive replied in the most tactical speech he had ever delivered. He first recapitulated his services, and invited attention to the fact that the India Office and the Crown, being in possession of the general tenor of the circumstances upon which his accuser had dwelt, had repeatedly thanked him for those services; he then exposed the interested and revengeful motives of the men who had instigated the attack, sparing not even those in high places, who, from various causes had allowed themselves to sanction it; turning from that subject, he asked prominent attention to the fact that the India Office, now his accuser, had almost forced him to proceed for a second time to Bengal, and had expressed a deep regret that his health had not allowed him to stay there longer. "After certificates such as these, Sir," he concluded, "am I to be brought here like a criminal, and the very best parts of my conduct construed into crimes against the State?"

Stating that the resolution, if carried, would confiscate all he possessed in the world except his paternal fortune of five hundred pounds a year, he continued:

“ But on this I am content to live ; and, perhaps, I shall find more real content of mind and happiness than in the trembling affluence of an unsettled fortune. But, Sir, I must make one more observation. If the definition of the honourable gentleman (Colonel Burgoyne) and of this House, that the State, as expressed in these resolutions, is, *quoad hoc*, the Company, then, Sir, every farthing I enjoy is granted to me. But to be called upon, after sixteen years have elapsed, to account for my conduct in this manner, and, after an uninterrupted enjoyment of my property, to be questioned, and considered as obtaining it unwarrantably, is hard indeed ; it is a treatment I should not think the British Senate capable of. But if such should be the case, I have a conscious innocence within me that tells me my conduct is irreproachable. *Frangas, non flectes*. My enemies may take from me what I have ; they may, as they think, make me poor, but I will be happy. I mean not this as my defence, though I have done for the present. My defence will be heard at that bar ; but, before I sit down, I have one request to make to the House,—that when they come to decide upon my honour they will not forget their own.”

After some further discussion the consideration of the motion was adjourned, and it was ordered that evidence should be heard at the bar. On the 21st May a few witnesses were examined, and Lord Clive's evidence given before the Select Committee was read. The debate on the original motion was then resumed by Mr. Stanley, who proposed to omit



from it the words more directly inculcating the honour of Clive.\* Mr. Fuller, who seconded the amendment, carried its intention even further by proposing to strike out the sentence which suggested that the action referred to in the original motion was the consequence of undue influence.† The amendment in its more comprehensive form was debated with great warmth. Clive laboured under the disadvantage of counting amongst his opponents the Prime Minister, the careless and indolent Lord North, the Attorney General, and many of those whose votes were dependent on the action of the Minister. He had against him, likewise, all the influence of the India Office, and of the holders of East India Stock. He was not himself present during the critical part of the debate. He had left the House in an early part of the evening, after having made an impassioned appeal to the House to take, if they would, his fortune, but to leave his honour intact. In his absence his case was managed by the Solicitor General, Wedderburn, afterwards Lord Loughborough. After a protracted debate the House proceeded to a division. The numbers were one hundred and fifty-five in favour of the amendment, ninety-five against it. This division stripped Burgoyne's motion of all its

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\* "And in so doing, the said Robert Lord Clive abused the powers with which he was intrusted to the evil example of the servants of the public, and to the dishonour and detriment of the State."

† "Through the influence of the powers with which he was entrusted, as a member of the Select Committee, and Commander-in-Chief of the British forces."

rancour. It left it a base narration of facts which no one disputed.\* Incensed to see the fruit of their labours vanish from their grasp, the opponents of Lord Clive made a desperate effort to restore the battle. One of the most influential amongst them rose, after the result of the division had been declared, and moved, "that Lord Clive did, in so doing, abuse the powers with which he was entrusted, to the evil example of the servants of the public."

The House had declared itself strongly in the preceding division against the introduction of any words which could be interpreted as affixing a stigma to the name of Clive, and it was not prepared to eat its own words at the dictation of a minority. After a brief discussion, the previous question was carried without a division. Finally, at 5 o'clock in the morning, the friends of Lord Clive, succeeded in inducing the House to accept, by an unchallenged vote, a motion which brought the long contest to a close. The House passed the resolution: "That Robert, Lord Clive, did, at the same time, render great and meritorious services to his country."

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\* "That it appears to this House that the Right Honorable Robert, Lord Clive, Baron of Plassey in the Kingdom of Ireland, about the time of the deposition of Sirāju'd daulah, and the succession of Mír J'afar on the masnad, did obtain and possess himself of two lakhs of rupees as Commander-in-Chief, a further sum of two lakhs and eighty thousand rupees as member of the Select Committee, and a further sum of sixteen lakhs or more, under the denomination of a private donation; which sums, amounting together to twenty lakhs and eighty thousand rupees, were of the value, in English money, of two hundred and thirty-four thousand pounds."

As long as the contest, so deeply affecting his character, had continued, Lord Clive had borne up against it with a manliness, a courage, and a fortitude worthy of all praise. It had been a heart-breaking effort for one who felt that he, and he alone, had given to his country an empire larger than the two islands which constitute the home of her children. But the strain had been too great for a mind which from its early days had been subject to prolonged fits of melancholy, and for a constitution which had been shattered not less by exposure and disease, than by the remedies which that disease had necessitated.\* The mental relief caused by the excitement of the opposition was followed by a reaction almost permanent in its character. It is true that there were occasions when—to use the words of the brilliant essayist—“his genius flashed through the gloom.” His condition, however, had passed almost beyond the region of hope. It was in vain that, immediately after the breaking up of Parliament he visited Bath; that, finding the waters of that place had lost their accustomed virtue, he then proceeded to the continent. By degrees correspondence with his numerous and attached friends, which had constituted one of his greatest resources in his trials and difficulties, became irksome to him. The increasingly acute pain caused by his bodily infirmities, especially by gall-stones, gradually but steadily worked an effect upon his

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\* To give relief to the pain which his maladies caused him, Clive had been forced to take increasing quantities of opium.

mental system. The travels abroad failed permanently to benefit him. After his return to England in 1774 the disease, working in two directions, continued to make progress. 'His mind had not the sustaining power which the consciousness that his great services were rightly appreciated by his fellow-countrymen would have given it. Far from that, the conviction that he was an object of hatred to many, and that his enemies, whom he knew to be as corrupt as they were unscrupulous, had the ear of the public, and had roused against him a mass of hatred and prejudice hardly to be surpassed, tended to sap the basis of the sustaining power which throughout the crisis had supported him. Little wonder, then, that under an acute paroxysm of intense pain, the mind, weakened and disappointed, gave way, or that, at such a moment, he should have been tempted to try the remedy which had failed him in his youth. He died by his own hand on the 22nd November 1774, just after he had completed his forty-ninth year.

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## CHAPTER XX.

## CHARACTER.

THE character of Lord Clive is an open book which all who run, may read. He possessed, above all things, genius. But that genius, uncultivated in early youth, transferred in manhood to a stage in which the higher virtues knew no place, where successful speculation at first in trade, and afterwards in the larger scheme of territorial aggrandisement, at the expense of rivals less skilful or of a race physically inferior, was the end and aim of existence, never acquired that exquisite sensibility which a more refined training might have given it. Like the genius of Napoleon, it remained to the last as rough as when it was hewn from the rock of nature, and not only as rough, but as disfigured by the mire and the clay which were adhering to it at the beginning. It is possible that a training of a higher character, earlier surroundings of a loftier and more refined tone, might have purified it entirely. It is, I say, possible: it is by no means certain. Nature might have asserted herself to the very end.

But that genius was there, a genius at first undefined, impatient of control, striving to burst its bonds, is undeniable. In his boyhood it gave evidence of its existence by the fascination which its owner exercised over his companions. They obeyed without a murmur the orders of this untutored being who hated learning, and who protested in all his actions against the discipline of a school. One of his masters, and one only, had the wit to discover the latent germs, which, undeveloped, made this boy to differ so much from other boys. But even he failed to guide them. The moral nature of the lad remained, during the entire period of school training, absolutely untouched by the discipline of his masters. It emerged from school-training as crude, as raw, as unpolished, as at the beginning. Beyond the most elementary education, Clive had imbibed no instruction which could discipline his mind. He entered the world at the age of nineteen an unlettered savage, unfit, as his friends painfully acknowledged, as he himself felt, to enrol himself in any of the professions open to a man of his position, qualified only by the power he felt within him for a life of adventure.

He went to India. For the first time he writhed under the restraints of real discipline. In a climate in which, for eight months in the year, out-door pursuits except in the very early morning or in the evening are forbidden, he was forced to apply himself to sedentary occupations as uninteresting as they were distasteful. He no longer possessed there the resources which, at school, had enabled him to

glide lightly through the hours of nominal labour. He had no congenial friends, no admiring comrades, with whom to plan, during those hours, the daring projects to be executed as soon as they should be free. Forced into communion with himself he found still no resources. He wanted action, and there was no action. Nor did the atmosphere around him contribute to alleviate the gloom induced by this introspection. From morning to night and from night to morning but one idea irradiated the scene. That idea was how, by private trade, sufficient money might be accumulated to enable each man entitled to trade privately to return with a fortune to his native land. And was it for this that he had come to India? Was it that, after years of drudgery in a bad climate, he might accumulate an income sufficient to enable him to live in the country he had quitted because he panted for the action which in it was denied him? The thought was intolerable. We can scarcely wonder that the despair produced by a contemplation of the only possible future before him drove him to attempt his existence. What was life to him, if life was to be drudgery to end only in vacuity?

Suddenly the scene changed. Action, after all, had become possible in India. The aggression of the French drove Clive and his co-patriots from Madras to Fort St. David. There he took part in the defence of that place against the attacks directed against it by Dupleix. A world gradually opened out to him in which he felt qualified to play a part. He recognised intuitively his fitness for the new situa-

tion. The instincts of his boyhood, the instincts which had commanded the obedience of his fellows, returned to him as fresh and as strong as they had been in those early days. Only, here, he was under restrictions: he was shut out from command: he was simply a volunteer, prevented even from offering suggestions or from criticising audibly the operations of others.

The new world had, then, its drawbacks. Genius had found action, it is true, but it was not the spontaneous action which is the fruit of its own vivid inspiration. Imagine Napoleon under the command of Cartaux! We see there Clive under Gingen! The situation was too intolerable.

Genius revolted! With the miserable generalship, which had forced Gingen to flee before d'Auteuil from Valkonda, Clive would have nought to do. Whatever might be the risk, he would speak out. Careless, then, of consequences; eager only to show how it might still be possible to remedy the evil; Clive returned to Fort St. David and communicated with Governor Saunders. Half convinced, but still somewhat distrusting the critic who was not a professional critic, Saunders subjected Clive to new proofs. When these had been satisfactorily given, he transferred him to the military service, and sent him to examine the city beleaguered by the French, and the fall of which would be fatal to the interests of which he had charge. Clive went, saw, and

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One of the incapable Generals under whom Bonaparte served before Toulon.



reported. The clear nature of his reports, the decided character of his recommendations, completed the influence he had gained over Saunders. Thenceforward every trammel was removed.

At last genius was unfettered. The result was seen at Arkát, at Kāvēripák, at Trichināpalli. The military conduct of Clive at those places, alike in protracted defence and in brilliant attack, his masterly combinations, his coolness and daring in danger, under surprise, his quick eye to seize every point of the situation, entitle him to a place amongst great captains. If he made a mistake, he repaired it so completely as to cause the enemy to regret that they had endeavoured to take advantage of it. But he made few mistakes. His conceptions were always brilliant, his plans were always masterly, his execution was always effective. In less than eighteen months he had conquered India south of the river Krishna—nominally for Muhammad Ali, really for his own countrymen.

Those months were the most brilliant of his life. They were the first in which he really lived. Existence previously had had so few charms for him that he would have been well content to let it go. But from the moment Saunders gave him leave to march on Arkát, he was born again. The gate to the world, wherein the ideas which overpowered him would have full and free scope, had been opened to him. He had action, at last, action of his own creation, action the consequence of the conceptions of his own genius. Then he revelled in life, then he felt all

the buoyancy of existence, the entire correspondence between the brain and the will which makes a strong man irresistible. He lived in those months. The savage of Lostock and Market Drayton had at last found his sphere in which the distorted genius of those early days would develop itself. They were to him what 1796 was to Napoleon. Their effect was not very dissimilar. In the midst of all his triumphs Clive remained a savage still. Genius had asserted itself. The time and the opportunity had not yet arrived for nature!

In due course that time and that opportunity arrived. A visit to England had proved to Clive that his schoolboy instincts were right; that his untutored and undisciplined nature was not trained to mingle with satisfaction in the ordinary social life of England. Again he panted for action. Again did he proceed to India in search of it.

This time action came to seek him. The renown he had gained in Southern India indicated him as the fittest person to recover the lost prestige of the English in Bengal. He proceeded to Bengal, recaptured Calcutta, terrified the Núwáb who had condoned, if he did not sanction, the slaughter of our countrymen, into the signing of a treaty, the clauses of which he dictated; crushed, in the teeth of his remonstrances, the French settlement on the Huglí; and by these successes obtained for his countrymen a position in the fairest province of India far surpassing any which they had held before. He did not stop there. Partly—at the outset, I believe, entirely—because he

was under orders to return to Madras as soon as he should have restored order in Bengal, and he felt convinced that his departure would be the signal for the renewal of the attack which in the preceding year had been so fatal; partly—as time went on—because in the vacillating and impulsive nature of Siráju'd daulah he had detected the qualities which make their owner an easy prey:—he determined not to abandon his task until he had for ever rendered the Núwáb powerless for mischief. So far his proceedings, so far likewise the end and aim of his policy, need no justification. His open and avowed object being to make the English settlement in Bengal secure against an attack such as that which only a few months earlier had destroyed it, he was bound to take the measures which, in his honour and conscience, he believed to be necessary to attain that end. He knew well that it was his own name—the name of Clive—not the name of the English—which had become a terror to the Núwáb. That prince had driven the English without Clive from their hearths and homes in Calcutta; the English led by Clive had recovered those hearths and homes, had stormed his own town of Huglí, had captured the French settlement, and now threatened him. Every communication between the two had satisfied Clive that his was the name which had frightened the Núwáb, which stood prominently forward as the protector of English interests in Bengal. He was justified, therefore, in resolving, before he should quit Bengal, to render the Núwáb powerless for mischief.

It was only when he came to ponder over the measures he should adopt to carry out this aim that the heavy clay of his baser nature was manifested. The negotiations carried on by means of Amichand with the wealthy bankers and the discontented nobles of Murshidábád gradually roused into action the passions which, for want of opportunity perhaps, had been dormant in this lower stratum. It can never be congenial to a lofty mind to urge a subordinate to use all his endeavours to induce the influential people with whom he comes in contact to betray their master. To bring himself to incite such a line of conduct was the first step made by Clive in the fatal path of mental degradation. The next step was infinitely more debasing. The negotiations with Amichand and others at the Court of Murshidábád had given Clive a very exaggerated idea of the treasures at the disposal of the ruling prince. From the carrying out of a measure which should simply render the Núwáb powerless for mischief, his mind passed, then, at a bound, to a scheme which, whilst attaining that end, should at the same time enrich himself. The intelligence received from Murshidábád that there were two highly influential nobles bidding for his support to betray their master, nurtured this conception. Thenceforward it became a deliberate plan. From the moment it took possession of his mind every scruple vanished, the baser nature triumphed; the flaws in the stone which had till then shone out with so pure and bright a lustre became manifest to every observer.

The baser nature triumphed. Revelling in its triumph it caused its master to perpetrate deeds from which, before he had been tempted, Clive himself would have shrunk back with horror. The price to be paid to himself for the death of Siráju'd daulah—for in the East deposition means death—two hundred and thirty-four thousand pounds, was a great temptation to the man who, only thirteen years before, had landed in Madras a penniless and unfriended lad. It was a temptation so great, so absorbing, that to clutch at the amount the baser nature had no thought for the victim—the misguided boy still in his teens—who might yet, with opportunity, redeem the faults of his early training. One word from Clive could have ensured that his life, at least, should be spared; the baser nature would not allow him to speak that word. Was it to be expected that it should? It had already made of him the betrayer of the agent who had served him well, who had woven the plot which was to give him the wealth he coveted! Had he one single feeling of sympathy for the wretch whom his falseness drove to madness? He speaks of him throughout his correspondence as a miserable tool who was to be discarded because he had demanded too much, and the threatened betrayal by whom of the plot against Siráju'd daulah would have been fatal to his plans.

The very thought that when so close to accomplishment those plans might fail, that, through the action of one man he might be baulked of the fortune dangling before his eyes, roused the baser nature to

the committal of a deed which for ever stamps its perpetrator. It made of Clive a forger!

The deed accomplished, the price of treason paid, genius once more re-asserted itself. Not, however, the pure unalloyed genius of the Southern India days, genius revelling in its freedom from swathing bonds, genius able to execute the plans it had conceived. No; side by side with that genius stalked the baser nature, the nature which, having tasted, continued to cry "Give, give!" Thus having, by an insistence on the prompt payment of the price of treason, reduced the supplanter of Sirájú'd daulah to the position of a dependant, unable, without his aid, to maintain order amongst his subjects, still less to repel foreign invasion, Clive insisted that for every service rendered there should be a corresponding reward. Sometimes the reward took the shape of money paid to the general coffers, but the baser nature never forgot the interests of its owner. This was especially manifested by the transfer to Clive himself in 1759, as a personal gift, of the zamíndarí of the whole of the districts south of Calcutta, then rented by the Company, and valued at thirty thousand pounds a year. His desperate clinging to this fatal gift, following, as that gift did, other large appropriations, was the main cause of the contentions with the India Office which were a principal factor in the troubles of his later life!

For the second time Clive visited England. Again, in spite of his wealth, his fame, his services, he felt ill at ease in the social life of his native land.

Whispers regarding the means whereby his wealth had been acquired had preceded him. His title to the estates which brought him, by his own admission, twenty-seven thousand pounds a year, was questioned. If he was not then looked upon with the suspicion which all but overwhelmed him at a later period, his society was not courted. Command virtually irresponsible had given him a brusqueness of manner which did not conciliate, nor did the stern expression of a countenance never well-favoured prepossess men in his favour. His ambition, too, was thwarted. He failed to obtain a seat in the House of Commons, he quarrelled with the India Office; he recognised every day that his achievements in Bengal were appreciated far below their value. He was inwardly intensely relieved when he was suddenly invited to return to that Presidency, to restore there the order which had disappeared on his departure.

The disorder which had supervened on his departure from the provinces he had conquered is to be traced to himself. His successors had made of his example a principle, and had carried that principle into the transactions of every-day life. Following the lines which he had laid down, the Government of Bengal had twice during the four years of his absence sold to the highest bidder the *Súbahdárí* of the three provinces. A principle which governed the disposal of the highest office in the state had come very rapidly to be applied to every office. Free-trade licenses, the monopoly of certain grades of the Company's servants,

were sent likewise into the market. Justice was bought and sold. Honour, morality, virtue, the sense of right and wrong, had disappeared. The literature of the period, of which some exists still, proves that, from highest to lowest, corruption, and all the baser children of corruption, reigned supreme in the British settlements. So great was the scandal, that it forced even from Clive, on his return in 1765, the exclamation, "Alas! how is the English name sunk!" \*

But, after all, the men he found in Bengal had simply applied to every department the example which Clive had given them when dealing with the highest. It was that fatal transaction with Mír J'afar, that sudden accumulation of wealth by the sale of the highest office in Bengal, which had stimulated the cupidity of every office-holder in the country. Granted that the overthrow of Siráju'd daŭlah, that the bargaining with Mír J'afar, had been necessary for the security of English interests in India, high morality required that the pecuniary advantages derived therefrom should be accumulated for the Company of which

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\* "If I were to dwell upon the situation of the Company's affairs in Bengal," he writes in another letter, "both civil and military, a volume would not be sufficient. The inhabitants of the country have been laid under contribution by both civil and military, their goods taken from them at an under-price, and presents of money have either been extorted from them, or given for interfering in the affairs of government by insisting on men of high employments being turned out, and others appointed in their room."



Clive was the servant, by the use of whose resources alone he had been able to carry out his part of the compact! But for the servants to take the kernel and leave the master the shell, for the servants to take the profit and charge the master with the cost—that was an example which, occurring in a country more than ten thousand miles distant from supervision, could not fail to be elevated into a principle.

Slight reason, then, had Clive, on his return to India in 1765, to be surprised at the universality of the application of the principle which he had inaugurated. But the Clive who returned to India in 1765, was not, to all outward appearance, the Clive who had quitted that country in 1760. The man who had filled his coffers by the disposal of a vice-regal throne; who, defending his conduct in after years, expressed surprise at his own moderation at that eventful period; who had not scrupled to accept from Mir J'afar, in return for services rendered to that prince as a servant of the Company, lands valued at thirty thousand pounds a year, and then rented by the Company, thus assuming the position of landlord to his masters—returned to India a hater of corruption, an ardent lover of all the virtues, a man determined, at all costs, to put down vice, to repress bribery, to make the taking of presents illegal—to cleanse, in a word, the Augæan stable, the existence of which his example in preceding years had made possible!

Clive's second administration in Bengal, regarded as

a detached work, merits the highest praise. Could he have obliterated all the details of the first administration, he would have descended to posterity with a crown of real glory encircling his brows. He was there the stern, just, thorough, resolute man, waging war against corruption and its kindred vices, eradicating the system which had made those vices possible, punishing the guilty, urging upon his masters a course of action which would have destroyed every excuse for dabbling in trade. All that he did he did thoroughly, completely, well. He could not make a perfect cure, because the one course which would have been effectual to that end—the placing on a proper footing of the salaries of public servants—was not permitted by his masters. But he did everything but that. He suppressed a mutiny—of which he likewise was the indirect author—with a firmness, a coolness, and a success which form an example to all ages. He conducted a political negotiation, which secured for the English possessions a solid frontier. He showed himself in all respects the virtuous, resolute, far-sighted reformer and statesman.

But who was he who thus, in little more than two years, roughly rooted out the evil system he found existing? It was the same man who had planted that system. Well might the corrupt councillors who, administering Bengal in the early part of 1765, had, before the arrival of Clive, sold, for their own profit, the *Súbahdárí* of the three provinces—well might they argue that of all men living he who was coming to sit

above them could find no fault with their proceedings; for had not he set them the example? And when he did come, when he did find fault, when he openly reproached them, was not their anger, was not their indignation, well founded? Almost any other man but this man, they argued, would have had the right to reprove them. But for one who had realised, by similar means, an enormous fortune; who, by virtue of the position acquired by such an accumulation, was now sent to rule over them; for such a man to prohibit actions in them which he never scrupled to commit himself—that was the veriest hypocrisy; that was the cant of the profligate who has outlived his powers; that was, in very deed, Satan reproving sin. This thought, undoubtedly, underlay the unpopularity of Clive during his second administration; it underlay the hostility after his return to England, which shortened his life. The rebukes which men could have borne, the reforms to which men would have submitted, from one whose hands were pure, they could not tolerate from a man who was revelling in wealth acquired by means which he denounced when put into action by others!

There was reason in this objection. Men will not stand to be lectured by a man who has profited by the vices which he denounces in them. The manner in which Clive had made his fortune ought to have prevented him, being the man he was, from returning to India. It would be a mistake to suppose that he returned thither a changed man. His nature had hardened, that was all. The clay had become as

solid as the crystal of which it now formed a part. He had never repented of the manner in which he had acquired his fortune. None of the actions which posterity has reprobated caused his conscience the smallest uneasiness. He justified every action—even to the forging of Admiral Watson's name and his treatment of Amichand—to his friends, to himself, later on before Parliament. He had simply become hardened. He felt the stronger from his hardening. He even, if we may judge from his correspondence, felt most righteously indignant at the perpetration by others of the vices which had made his fortune. Who has not witnessed a father reproaching in his son the sins which he himself as a young man had committed? There we see Clive; the only difference being that, whilst the father had not profited from his youthful depravities, the fortune acquired by Clive stood against him and condemned him!

Whilst, therefore, it is impossible not to award the highest meed of praise to the second administration of Clive, our admiration must stop there. It cannot extend to the man himself. To have been consistent, Clive should have despoiled himself of the gains he had acquired by the means he was denouncing. He was not capable of this sacrifice. He was, then, as his enemies declared, in the position of Satan reproving sin.

He returned to England, to meet on landing the maledictions and the maledictory effects of the men whom he had denounced for corruption. They did not spare him. Every hour he was made to feel

their implacable resentment. The poisoned arrows discharged by them at his most vulnerable points were numerous enough "to darken the face of the sun." In the council chamber of the nation, in the baronial hall, in the drawing-room, in the hovel of the working man, the stories of the atrocities of this "bold bad man" were circulated and believed. Not one stratum of society was exempt from their influence. Literature, represented by Johnson, denounced him; the peasantry believed he had built the walls of his house so thick in order to keep out the devil. In the pulpit, on the stage, in the ante-chambers of the palace, in the coffee-rooms of Fleet Street and the Strand, the cry was still the same.

Clive bore up against the hue and cry, which would have overwhelmed a lesser man, with the same manly and daring courage which had already carried him through so many dangers. Not for an instant would he bow his head to the storm. Proudly he confronted his enemies, admitted the deeds they imputed to him, justified them, claimed credit even for moderation, and then, turning on those who had hounded on every class of society to persecute him, denounced them with unmeasured scorn. He, at least, had rendered services which had added provinces equal in extent to a European kingdom to the Empire; never had so large a territory been gained at so small an outlay; his actions, now imputed to him as crimes, had been condoned by his masters. But for those who brought these charges! It was they who, by making

of a special act performed under extraordinary circumstances a precedent, and exaggerating that precedent until it had taken the shape of an immoral and unjustifiable principle, had imperilled the British hold on the provinces he had conquered, and brought the British name into disrepute. It was because he had baffled their cupidity and foiled their schemes that they now accused him before his countrymen, that they attempted to make him the author of the evils which, in effect, he had remedied.

The defence of Clive against the secret inuendoes, the exaggerations, the spoken and whispered calumnies by which he had been assailed, was, in fact, complete. The open charges he never, I repeat, attempted to deny. He justified alike his treatment of Amichand, the use which he had made of the name of Watson, his appropriation of the two hundred and thirty-four thousand pounds which the victory of Plassey had gained for him. But the under-current of public feeling was too strong to be turned by such a defence as his. Calumny had done its work too completely. With the great mass of mankind the admission of the major premiss, an admission compulsory because so easy of demonstration, stood forward, as a proof that the minor premiss, which might be denied because not capable of being brought clearly home, must be true also. On the public, then, on society, the defence of Clive fell as the spear hurled by Priam fell on the armour of Achilles. Even in the House of Commons, though he was able to avert a hostile verdict, his friends deemed it unwise to

propose an approval of the conduct which had been impugned. The sums he had accepted to compass the dethronement of Siráju'd daulah were recorded; the House refused, by accepting the previous question, to come to a decision as to whether his acceptance of those sums was worthy of condemnation; and he was declared to have rendered great and meritorious services to his country. All that the House of Commons did was to affirm a truism. It shrank from passing an opinion. The verdict was tantamount to a lenient censure!

Clive did not long survive this contest. The bitter struggle had told on a constitution enfeebled by disease. The mind which had been sustained by the excitement of the contest, could not bear the silence of the reaction. And such a reaction! What had he now to live for, this man who had been the arbiter of the fate of millions? All that would have made the evening of life enjoyable—

That which should accompany old age,  
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
He must not look to have.

He had them not. He felt that he was hated, that in the eyes of the multitude he was a cruel tyrant who had despoiled the poor to enrich himself. He was shut out even, it seemed to him, from employment. The burden of living, even at the age of forty-nine, was, under such circumstances, too great.

And yet there had been a better life open to his splendid genius. It may be profitable to imagine what Clive might have been if in the fatal year of his

life, 1757, he had been able to subdue the corroding desire of enriching himself quickly. We may grant, and fairly grant, that he felt then the absolute necessity, for the security of British interests, of replacing Siráju'd daulah by Mír J'afar ; we may even grant that he felt the necessity, for the security of the same interests, of so hampering Mír J'afar by enforced payments of money, as to deprive him of the power of turning against his allies. What a position would have been his if he had paid the money so acquired into the coffers of the Company, instead of dividing it with his fellow-servants of the Company ! No need would then have been felt for forging the name of Watson, or for breaking faith with Amichand ! Clive would have returned to England the immaculate hero ; the illustrious warrior who, with hands unspotted, had given the nucleus of a new empire to his country. Nor would that have been his only reward. He would not, it is true, have amassed the fortune which he actually acquired ; but it may well be surmised that neither his country nor the Court of Directors would have allowed him to remain a poor man. It is even possible that, in their appreciation of his disinterested conduct, the India House might have allowed him to retain, without a murmur, the jaghír which Mír J'afar, just prior to his return to England, had conferred upon him. That, however, is but a trifling detail. The fact would have stood out that this man, who had conquered Bengal, had achieved a more difficult conquest over himself. Still young, gifted, ambitious, what a career was not open to him ! Untrained as a



speaker, his first great speech in the House of Commons had wonderfully impressed so critical a judge of eloquence as was Lord Chatham. What if he had been able to use his oratorical powers, not to defend himself, but to serve his country! There is no limit to the vista which such a contemplation offers. . . A great reputation, a lofty and spotless character, genius unmeasured, great oratorical power, and forty-four! Everything was possible.

It was not to be. The want of scruple, which impelled him to throw aside every principle in order to clutch at the moneys of Siráju'd daulah, made of a life, which might have been brilliant beyond comparison, a failure ending in self-immolation. Clive laid the foundation of the British Empire in India; but he did not leave behind him that which a man as unscrupulous as himself, the great Napoleon, truly declared to be the best inheritance a man can leave to his children—"a reputation without spot."

. Can it be that there is something in the career of the conqueror which deadens conscience and scorps scruple? Look at Alexander, at Caius Julius, at Frederic II., at Napoleon! Clive was not worse than they. . . The work of Clive was, all things considered, as great as that of Alexander; it has endured far longer than that of Napoleon. Frederic triumphed to the last in spite of his want of scruple; and his work continued on the same basis, triumphs still. It was that want, however, which was fatal personally to Alexander and to Caius Julius, fatal politically to

Napoleon. The reader has seen how fatal it was to the conqueror of Plassey!

To sum up. Clive was a great soldier, a great administrator, a born leader of his fellows. The bluntness of his moral perceptions prevented him from being a great man!



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