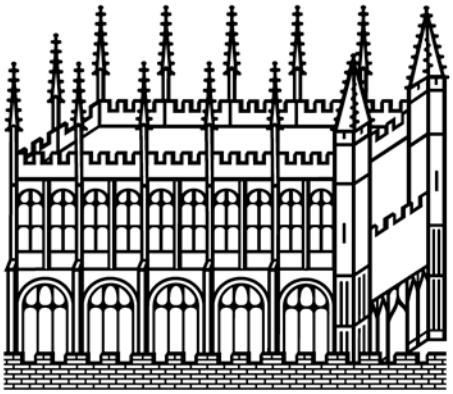

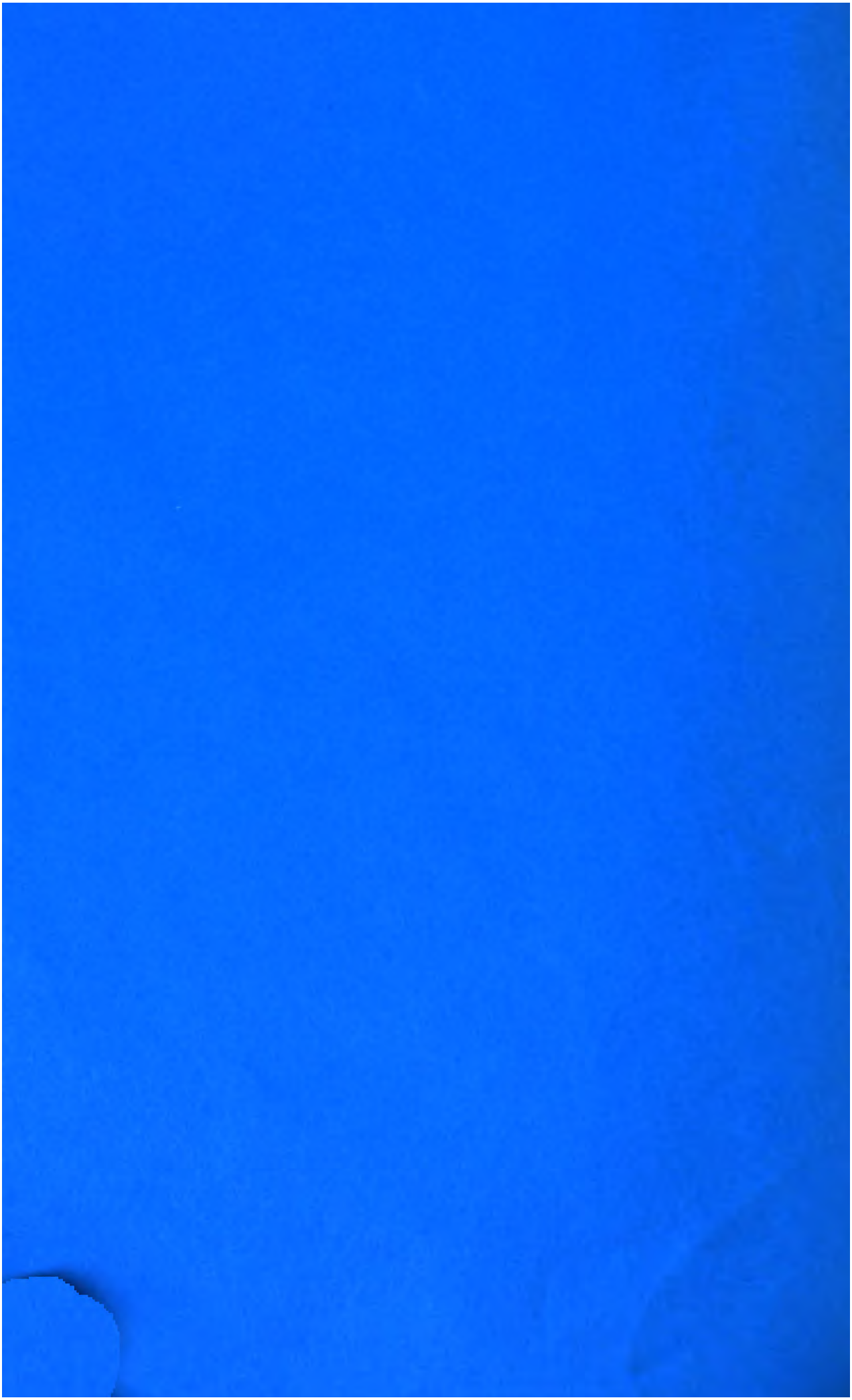

SPEECH

OF THE

RIGHT HON. GEORGE CANNING,

(PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF CONTROUL),

IN

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 1819,

IN PROPOSING

VOTES OF THANKS

TO

THE MARQUIS OF HASTINGS,

AND

THE BRITISH ARMY IN INDIA.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY

BLACK, KINGSBURY, PARBURY, AND ALLEN,

Booksellers to the Honourable East India Company,

No. 7, LEADENHALL-STREET.

1819.

Printed by W. Clowes, Northumberland-court, Strand.

SPEECH,

&c.

MR. SPEAKER,

I RISE, in pursuance of the Notice given by me to the House at the Opening of the Session, to propose a Vote of Thanks to the Marquis of Hastings, and to the Officers and Troops who served under his command during the late campaign in India. This Vote, I wish the House to understand, is intended merely as a tribute to the military conduct of the Campaign, and not in any wise as a sanction of the policy of the War. I feel it necessary to state this reservation the more emphatically, lest, from my having deferred my proposition until the Papers, which the Prince Regent was graciously pleased to direct to be laid before us, had been for some time in the hands of the

Members of this House, any apprehension should be entertained that I wished the policy of the measures adopted in India to be discussed on this occasion, with the view of conveying in the Vote of Thanks an implicit general approbation. I assure you, Sir, that I have no such object in view. The political character of Lord Hastings's late measures forms no part of the Question upon which I shall ask the House to decide. My object in the present Motion is to acknowledge with due praise and gratitude the splendid services of the Indian army. I was, indeed, anxious to have the Papers upon the table, because some statement of the political relations of the different parties in the late hostilities—in the way, not of argument but of narrative—seems necessary, to render intelligible the origin and operations of the war. From these papers I will describe as succinctly as I can, the situation in which the British Government found itself placed towards the different Native Powers of India: and if, in performing this task, I should let slip any expression of my

own opinions as to the policy of the Governor-General (and it may be hardly possible to avoid doing so, whatever caution I endeavour to observe,) I beg to be understood as by no means calling upon the House to adopt those opinions. In agreeing to the Vote to which I trust they will agree this evening, they will dismiss altogether from their consideration, the preliminary observations with which I introduce it.

I approach the subject, Sir, with the greater caution and delicacy, because I know with how much jealousy the House and the Country are in the habit of appreciating the triumphs of our arms in India. I know well that, almost uniformly successful as our military operations in that part of the world have been, they have almost as uniformly been considered as questionable in point of justice. Hence the termination of a war in India, however glorious, is seldom contemplated with unmixed satisfaction. That sentiment generally receives some qualification from a notion, in most cases per-

haps rather assumed than defined, that the war is likely to have been provoked on our part, with motives very different from those of self-defence. Notions of this sort have undoubtedly taken deep root in the public mind: but I am confident that in the present instance (and I verily believe on former occasions which are gone by, and with which it is no business of mine to meddle at present) a case is to be made out as clear for the justice of the British cause, as for the prowess of the British arms. Neither, however, do I accuse of want of candour those who entertain such notions; nor do I pretend to deny that the course of Indian history, since our first acquaintance with that country, furnishes some apparent foundation for them. It is not unnatural that, in surveying that vast Continent, presenting as it does—from the Boorampooter to the Indus, and from the Northern Mountains to the Sea—an area of somewhere about one million of square miles, and containing not less than one hundred millions of inhabitants;—in looking back to the period when our possessions there consisted

only of a simple factory on the coast for the purposes of a permitted trade, and in comparing that period with the present, when that factory has swelled into an empire; when about one-third in point of extent, and about three-fifths in point of population, of those immense territories are subject immediately to British government; when not less than another fourth of the land, and another fifth of the inhabitants, are under rulers either tributary to the British power or connected with it by close alliance;—it is not unnatural that, upon such survey and comparison, prejudices should have arisen against the rapid growth of our Indian Establishment;—that its increase should have been ascribed, not only by enemies or rivals, but by sober reflection and by impartial philosophy, to a spirit of systematic encroachment and ambition.

On the other hand, in a power so situated as ours,—a power planted in a foreign soil, and without natural root in the habits or affections of the people;—compelled to struggle, first for

its existence, and then for its security, and, in process of time, for the defence of allies from whom it might have derived encouragement and aid,—against nations in the habit of changing their masters on every turn of fortune, and, the greater part, already reduced under Governments founded by successful invasion;—in a power so situated, it can hardly be matter of surprise that there should have been found an irrepressible tendency to expansion. It may be a mitigation, if not a justification, of such a tendency, that the inroads which it has occasioned have grown out of circumstances hard to be controlled; that the alternative has been, in each successive instance, conquest or extinction; and that in consequence, we have prevailed for the most part over preceding conquerors, and have usurped—if usurped—upon older usurpations.

But, with all that may be said in excuse for this disposition of our Indian Empire to stretch its limits wider every day, far am I, very far,

from describing it as a disposition to be fostered and indulged; or from undervaluing the constant and laudable exertions of the British Parliament to check its progress, and, if possible, to counteract its impulse. Would to God that we could find, or rather that we could long ago have found, the point—the resting-place—at which it was possible to stand! But the finding of that point has not depended upon ourselves alone.

I state these considerations rather as qualifying generally the popular and sweeping condemnations of Indian warfare, than as necessary or applicable in the case of the present war. I refer to the wise and sober enactments of the British Parliament,—not to dispute their authority or to set aside their operation; but because I can with confidence assert, that at no period of our Indian history, have the recorded Acts and Votes of Parliament been made more faithfully the basis of instructions to the Government in India than at the period when the Marquis of Hastings assumed the

supreme authority. It is but justice to the Executive Body of the East India Company to say, that the whole course and tenour of their instructions has been uniformly and steadily adverse to schemes of aggrandizement, and to any war which could safely and honourably be avoided. It is but justice to the memory of the noble person, whom I succeeded in the office which I have the honour to hold, to say, that he uniformly inculcated the same forbearing policy, and laboured to turn the attention of the Indian Governments from the extension of external acquisitions or connexions, to the promotion of internal improvement. And having said this, it may not be an unpardonable degree of presumption in me to add that I have continued to walk in the path of my predecessor; that I have omitted no occasion of adding my exhortations to those which I found recorded in my Office, against enterprises of ambition and wars of conquest. So strongly and so recently had the pacific system been recommended, that upon the eve of the breaking out of the late hostilities, the hands of the

Supreme Government were absolutely tied up from any foreign undertakings, except in a case of the most pressing exigency. Such an exigency alone produced, or could justify, the war, the glorious result of which the House is now called upon to mark by its vote.

That war takes its denomination from the Power against which it was in the first instance exclusively directed, the Pindarries: —a Power so singular and anomalous, that perhaps no exact resemblance could be found for it in history; a Power without recognized government or national existence; the force of which, as developed in the papers upon the table, is numerically so small, that many persons have naturally enough found themselves at a loss to conceive how it could be necessary for the suppression of such a force to make preparations so extensive. It is true that the Pindarries consisted only of from 30,000 to 40,000 regular and irregular horse; capable however of receiving continual reinforcements, and of eluding, by the celerity of their move-

ments, the attack of regular armies. Remnants of former wars, the refuse of a disbanded soldiery,—they constituted a *nucleus* round which might assemble all that was vagabond and disaffected,—all that was incapable of honest industry and peaceful occupation,—all that was opposed in habit and in interest to a system of settled tranquillity in Hindostan. Hostilities against them could, therefore, be undertaken only at the risk of bringing into action all the elements of a restless and dissatisfied population; and the hazards to be calculated were not merely those arising from their positive strength, but those also which might arise from the contagion of their excitement and example.

It was not, however, from mere speculation as to the danger to be apprehended from such a body collecting and bringing into activity the unquiet and dissolute of all manner of *casts* and tongues and religions;—it was not from theoretical conviction of the incompatibility of the existence of such a power in central India,

with the maintenance of social order and general peace, that the late war was undertaken. The Indian Government, however confident its persuasion upon these points might be,—however keen its sense of the perils to which the peace of India was exposed,—were too fast bound by their instructions to strike the first blow, or to engage in war upon any less provocation than that of positive aggression either against the British power itself, or against allies whom its faith was pledged to defend. The war was provoked by actual aggressions, such as no government could endure without the neglect of a sacred duty. The native population would, without doubt, have had just reason to complain if the British Government, having superseded those who would have sympathized with their sufferings, had omitted to avenge injuries which the awe of the British name ought perhaps to have been sufficient to prevent. Neither was it one aggression only, nor a series of aggressions confined to one year, that called for chastisement: nor was it against distant provinces, or obscure dependencies of the British power that these

injuries had been directed. So long ago as 1812 an irruption was made into Bengal; in 1813 into the territory of Bombay; and in 1816, accompanied with circumstances of extraordinary audacity and outrage, into that of Madras. Of this last irruption intelligence was received in England, within a few weeks after the final and most peremptory injunctions of a forbearing policy had been despatched to India: and this intelligence it was that determined the Government at home so far to relax those injunctions, as to loose the hands of the Indian Government specifically against the invaders. Even without such specific permission, the Government in India could not longer have forborne; unless it had forgotten what it owed to its subjects, and had been contented to forfeit its good name throughout the territory of Hindostan. And it is but justice to that Government to say, that it had taken on its own responsibility a determination conformable to its character and its duty. Fortunately, the delays incident to the season at which this determination was taken, enabled the Marquis

of Hastings to receive from home a warrant for his proceedings, before he began to act on his own discretion.

The war, therefore, against the Pindarries was undertaken by the Indian Government, with the full concurrence of the Government at home. And what was the nature of the aggressions which called for this concurrence?—Nothing can be imagined more dreadful than the irruptions of the Pindarries. There is no excess of lawless violence which they did not perpetrate; no degree of human suffering which they were not in the habit of inflicting. Rapine, murder in all its shapes, torture, rape, and conflagration, were not rare and accidental occurrences in their progress, but the uniform and constant objects of their every enterprise, and the concomitants of every success. After ravaging tracts of country of all visible wealth, they inflicted torture on innocence, helplessness and age, for the purpose of extorting the avowal and indication of hidden treasure. There were instances where the whole female

population of a village precipitated themselves into the wells as the only refuge from these brutal and barbarous spoilers; where, at their approach, fathers of families surrounded their own dwellings with fuel, and perished with their children in the flames kindled by their own hands. If it were not a shame to add to such details any thing like a calculation of pecuniary loss, it might be added, that this last invasion was calculated to have cost, in booty and in wanton waste, scarcely less than a million sterling.

No wonder then that the Government of India had resolved to avenge and chastise such unparalleled atrocities so soon as the season for taking the field should arrive, even had they not received any previous sanction from England. No wonder that the Government at home had not hesitated to revoke its interdicts of war, and to qualify its injunctions of forbearance, upon receipt of details so afflicting to every feeling of human nature.

It is obvious from what I have already

stated, that a war once excited in India might draw into its vortex many whom fear of our power only kept at peace. With respect to the Pindarries themselves, the difficulty was to find an opportunity of striking a decisive blow. Attacked, routed, scattered in all directions, they would speedily collect and congregate again; as a globule of quicksilver, dispersing for a moment under the pressure of the finger, reunites as soon as that pressure is withdrawn. But the Pindarries had also chances of external support. They had, many of them, been trained to arms in the service of Scindia, the greatest among the native princes who maintain an independent rule; in the service of Holkar, long the rival of Scindia for preponderance in the Mahratta confederacy; and in that of Meer Khan, a Mahomedan adventurer, who, originally employed as an auxiliary by Holkar, had the address to render himself, for a time, master of the Government which he was called in to support; and to carve out for himself, in return for his abdication of that influence, a substantive and independent sovereignty. However

contemptible therefore in themselves, when compared with the numerous and well-trained armies of the British Government, yet as the fragments of bands that had been led by formidable chieftains to whom they still professed allegiance, these vagrant hordes might be the means of calling into action Powers of greater magnitude and resources,—Scindia, Holkar, and lastly, Meer Khan, himself essentially a predatory Power, and the leader only of more regular and disciplined Pindarries. Nor was this the utmost extent of danger to be apprehended. Suspicions might also be naturally entertained that the other Mahratta powers were not displeased to see the British authority, against which they had more than once combined with all their forces in vain, weakened in effect and in opinion by the unavenged attack of such despicable antagonists; and that when the occasion should ripen, they might not be disinclined to revenge and retrieve their former defeats. But whatever might be the extent of immediate hostility to be encountered, or the chances of future danger to be calculated, the

case was one which did not admit of doubt. The most beneficial acquisitions of territory would not have justified the incurring either the expense or the hazard of a war; but no hazard and no expense could be put in competition with the vindication of national honour, and the discharge of national duty.

In the endeavour to render intelligible the origin and operations of the war, I fear I may have trespassed much too long with prefatory matter upon the patience of the House. But it will be felt that in offering these explanations, I have incidentally disposed of a question strictly military, which I have mentioned as suggesting itself on the first view of Lord Hastings's undertaking,—how it happened that preparations on so large a scale were necessary for the suppression of a horde of 30,000 horsemen? Banditti as they were, it will have been shewn that they touched in near relation three powerful independent Chiefs of India;—friendly indeed by the existing state of peaceful relations, but in character, and habit, and interest, our foes.

It will have been shewn that two of these three chiefs being members of the great Mahratta confederacy, it would not have become a prudent statesman to lay out of his contemplation the possibility, however remote—however in the name of good faith to be disbelieved and deprecated—that the nominal head and the other members of that confederacy, the Peishwah, the Rajah of Nagpore, and the prince known by the title of the Guickwar (whose dominions are situated on the western side of Hindostan) might, if the course of events should be protracted or untoward, forget the obligations of treaties, and make common cause with those whose hostility we more nearly apprehended.

In fact, of these last mentioned Mahratta States, our allies and tributaries, the Guickwar is the only one that did not, in the course of the war, take part with our enemies. The Peishwah and the Rajah of Nagpore, though recently bound to us by the most solemn engagements—and the latter particularly by the most signal benefits—did avail themselves of the earliest opportunity to de-

clare against us:—with a treachery which, to Lord Hastings's trusting and generous nature, was unexpected; but which, though unexpected, did not take him unprepared.

I now come, Sir, to the operations in the field: upon which, extensive and complicated as they were,—spread over so wide a theatre, and involving so much intricacy of military detail,—I do not presume to venture to speak with any particularity; or to offer myself as a guide to the House through a labyrinth, which I have neither skill nor practice to enable me to trace. I shall confine myself to the general course, and character, and results, of the campaign.

The House has seen that when the Governor General prepared to take the field against the Pindarries, he looked forward to the possible hostility of Scindia, Holkar, and Meer Khan. With the Peishwah—a Prince the most important from the influence of his high rank among the Mahratta States,—and with the Rajah of Nagpore, treaties had been recently signed and ratified, under such fair-seeming protesta-

tions of good faith and friendship that, so far as instruments and professions could be binding, the fidelity of these Powers seemed assured. The treaties to which I refer are the first and second in the collection upon the Table.

So effectual were the plans and dispositions of Lord Hastings, that Scindia, the most formidable of his expected enemies, was overawed, and compressed, as it were, into a new treaty which pledged him to active co-operation against the Pindarries. The utmost extent of the stipulations of this treaty cannot be said to have been very diligently fulfilled by him: but so far the object of it was effected that he at least remained neutral during the campaign. Whether in this respect Scindia acted under the impulse of fear, or was persuaded by arguments addressed to his interest and ambition, the prudence of the Governor-General is equally conspicuous: it detracts nothing from military skill to have been aided by political sagacity. As to Meer Khan, the overwhelming force

which Lord Hastings brought to bear upon him compelled his immediate acquiescence and submission. He withdrew his troops and surrendered his artillery. It remains to speak of the third Power whose hostility was expected—Holkar. With Holkar's Government, (the actual chief being a minor) negotiations were for some time carried on: regarding which, the Papers on the table contain information somewhat less ample than could be wished; as by some omission, no doubt accidental, various documents relating to these transactions have not yet reached this Country. That Lord Hastings had been in negotiation with the Regent, the mother of the young Rajah; and that great hopes were indulged of a favourable issue, is clear: but how these hopes were disappointed does not appear in the documents before the House. I am, however, enabled to add to what appears in the Papers, one fact the particulars of which have only come to my knowledge within a few days. A short time before the great and decisive battle with the forces of Holkar, one of the refractory and disaffected chieftains

in his council, took this summary method of over-ruling the policy of the Regent: he entered her tent at night, dragged her out by her hair, and severing her head from her body, cast both into the river. Of the change thus suddenly wrought in Holkar's counsels, the first indication was, an attack by the army of Holkar on the troops composing the advanced guard of Sir Thomas Hislop.

This brings me to the battle of Maheidpore—the only great general action which occurred in the course of the campaign. Of this battle I feel myself incompetent, even if it were necessary, to enter into the military details: the Gazettes furnish a more perspicuous account of it than I could pretend to offer. But I may be permitted to say, that more determined gallantry, more inflexible perseverance, or greater exertion of mind and body on the part of every individual engaged, were never displayed than in the battle of Maheidpore. The result was, the defeat and dissolution of the army of the enemy,—though not without a loss on our side, deeply to be deplored. This

victory recommends to the gratitude of the House the name of Sir Thomas Hislop, by whose conduct and under whose auspices it was won; and that of Sir John Malcolm—second in command on that occasion;—second to none in renown—whose name will be remembered in India as long as the British tongue is spoken, or the British flag hoisted throughout that vast territory.

The result of this battle, as it was the complete dissolution of the army of Holkar, so was it that of the confederacy among the Mahratta Powers, which had long been secretly formed, and which an unprosperous or even a doubtful issue of our first action in the field, would unquestionably have brought into full play. A treaty of peace was forthwith negotiated with Holkar, by which were ceded to us all his possessions on the south side of the river Nerbudda: and the remainder of the campaign, so far as this member of the hostile confederacy was concerned, consisted in collecting for the British Government the scattered fragments of his dismembered chieftainship.

While the campaign was proceeding thus successfully against those whom Lord Hastings had taken into account as probable enemies, their number was unexpectedly increased by the addition of the Peishwah, the executive Head of the Mahratta Empire;—who suddenly broke the ties which bound him (as has been seen) in the strictest amity to the British Government. Even Sir John Malcolm—better qualified perhaps than any other person to fathom the designs and estimate the sincerity of the Native Powers—had been so far imposed upon, in an interview with that prince at Poonah, as to express to Lord Hastings his perfect conviction that the friendly professions of the Peishwah deserved entire confidence. In the midst of this unsuspecting tranquillity, at a moment now known to have been concerted with the other Mahratta chieftains, the Peishwah manifested his real intentions by an unprovoked attack upon the Residency (the house of the British Resident) at Poonah. Mr. Elphinstone, (a name distinguished in the literature as well as in the politics of the East) exhibited on that trying occasion, military courage and skill

which, though valuable accessories to diplomatic talents, we are not entitled to require as necessary qualifications for civil employment. On that, and not on that occasion only, but on many others in the course of this singular campaign, Mr. Elphinstone displayed talents and resources, which would have rendered him no mean General, in a country where Generals are of no mean excellence and reputation.

The gallant resistance of Lieutenant-Colonel Burr, at the head of the small force cantoned in the vicinity of Poonah, to the concentrated army of the Peishwah,—and the brilliant and decisive victory subsequently gained over that army by Brigadier-General Smith, stand recorded in the Gazette—memorable instances of British valour. Nor less memorable is the instance of British moderation displayed by General Smith after his victory, in sparing the then hostile Capital of a treacherous enemy, which lay at the mercy of the conquerors.

It may be convenient to despatch in con-

tinuity what remains to be stated respecting the Peishwah, though anticipating for that purpose events and the order of time. It was the task of General Smith to pursue that fugitive prince through all the windings and doublings of a warfare which shifted its ground a thousand times; to overthrow his collected force a second time in a pitched battle; and in that battle to rescue from his power the Rajah of Sattarah, descendant of the ancient sovereigns,—and by just title, the real Head—of the Mahratta Empire. Of that Empire the Peishwah was originally the first executive minister. As happens frequently in Oriental Sovereignties the legitimate monarchy had for some time sunk into a mere name; and in that name the Peishwahs had now for six generations exercised the supreme authority, keeping during the same period the successive hereditary sovereigns in confinement. To seize the person of the Rajah of Sattarah, in the fort of that name in which he had long been immured, was the first object of the Peishwah in his flight from Poonah; lest, falling into the hands of the British, the restitution of that So-

vereign to his state should lead to the final extinction of the Peishwah's office and power. To defeat this precaution was the effect of General Smith's victories; and it was no small reward of his exertions to be the instrument of such a restoration. Amid the rapid revolutions and fluctuating dynasties of the East, it is not always that European policy can satisfy itself as to the correctness of the course which circumstances or engagements may compel it to pursue or to sanction. But it is no unsatisfactory consequence of a faithless and unprovoked attack upon the British power, that a lawful sovereign has been replaced on the throne of his ancestors, by the same British army which drove a perfidious aggressor from his capital, and finally reduced him from a wanderer to a captive.

What has been stated of the unexpected hostility of the Peishwah, applies, in its general outline and with change only of names and places, to the Rajah of Berar. At Nagpore, as at Poonah, an attack was suddenly made on the British Residency; while the attention of the Governor-

General was supposed to be exclusively occupied with the Pindarry war. A similar resistance was successfully opposed to this attack by the Resident, Mr. Jenkins; who affords another instance of the happy union of military qualifications with diplomatic skill; and whose courage and constancy had been heretofore displayed under very trying circumstances, when, after the former Mahratta war, he held the office of Resident at the Court of Scindia. The few troops stationed at Nagpore, under Lieutenant-Colonel Scott, made a gallant stand against the superior numbers of the enemy—(a superiority sufficient to surround and overpower the British force, even if the attack had been foreseen,) instances of individual heroism displayed on this occasion are deservedly recorded in our military annals. It remained for the skill and valour of Brigadier-General Doveton to follow up the advantages thus obtained; and to complete the overthrow of a Power which had acted with such perfidious violence. The hostility of Nagpore was a still greater surprise than that of Poonah. The result in both cases

was the same. The Peishwah is consigned to a secure though mitigated captivity,—the Rajah of Berar continues still a fugitive, but so reduced and deserted, that although I cannot aver that a renewal of hostilities by him is altogether impossible,—I trust that they cannot be renewed in a shape likely to give the Governor-General much trouble or uneasiness.

Neither had these distant and unforeseen occurrences the effect, which was probably anticipated by the Mahrattas, of calling off the attention of the Bengal Government from the original object of their military preparations—the Pindarries. Within three months after the opening of the campaign, this formidable horde had ceased to exist as a body. Surrounded, and driven, as if into a net, between the converging forces of the British Presidencies, repelled on one side from the frontiers of the Company's territories, and pressed on the other against the frontiers of Scindia and Holkar, (Scindia's territory being closed against them by that Chieftain's treaty of co-operation, and Holkar's by the treaty of peace which

followed the battle of Maheidpore); cut off from their accustomed retreat across the Nerbudda, into the territories of Poonah or Nagpore; and unable, as is their nature, to make head against a regular army in the field; they gradually melted away, dispersed, concealed, or surrendered themselves; their families, their treasured plunder, their fortresses, fell into our hands; and that association of freebooters may I hope be said to be extirpated, not indeed in their persons, but in purpose and in name.

Of such complicated hostilities, covering an extent of country before which the dimensions of an European campaign shrink in comparison, it is, as I have said, quite impossible for me to attempt any thing like a detailed exposition. Among feats of prowess and deeds of gallantry performed contemporaneously in scenes of action far removed from each other but conducing alike to one great end, I feel totally unable to thread the mazes of victory, and to select instances for minute specification and particular praise, either with justice to the British troops or with satisfaction to my own sense of their

merits. The names of the leaders and of the actors in these distinguished scenes must be fresh in the recollection of those who have perused the Reports of the Campaign; and I fear that if I were to attempt a catalogue, I might, from inadvertence (though not from partiality) leave many well deserving of praise unnamed. In every instance the valour of the British troops has been eminently conspicuous. And when I say—of the *British* troops,—let me guard the House against any such erroneous impression, as that the contest was one between tried and valiant British soldiers on the one side, and feeble and unwarlike natives on the other. Let it not be considered as an unequal conflict of European valour with untaught Indian courage: for, out of about 90,000 troops, whom Lord Hastings brought into the field, 10,000 only or thereabouts were British: the remainder were the native forces of the East-India Company,—trained, it is true, by European officers, and proving by their obedience, their courage, their perseverance, their endurance, that in discipline and in achieve-

ments they were capable of rivalling their British instructors.

In doing justice to the bravery of the native troops, I must not overlook another virtue—their fidelity. Many of the Bombay army had been recruited in the territories of the Peishwah; their property, their friends, their relatives, all that was valuable and dear to them, were still in that prince's power. Previously to the commencement of hostilities the Peishwah had spared no pains to seduce and corrupt these troops,—he abstained from no threats to force them from their allegiance: but his utmost arts were vain. The native officers and soldiers came to their British commanders with the proofs of these temptations in their hands, and renewed the pledges of their attachment. One man—a non-commissioned officer—brought to his Captain the sum of 5,000 rupees, which had been presented to him by the Peishwah in person, as an earnest of reward for desertion*. The vengeance denounced by the Peishwah was not

* The name of this man—*Sheick Houssein*—however unmusical to European ears, deserves to be recorded.

an unmeaning menace. It did in many instances, fall heavily on the relatives of those who resisted his threats and his entreaties; but the effect was rather to exasperate than to repress their ardour in the service to which they had sworn to adhere.

This combined courage and attachment were never more conspicuous than on one occasion, which I will take the liberty to particularize, for the purpose of paying a just tribute as well to the native troops, as to the talents of an officer commanding them. It is an instance which I may select without invidiousness, as the rank of the officer does not allow of his name being mentioned in a Vote of Thanks.

A body of between 800 and 900 men, all natives, except the artillery (the proportion of which to a force of this strength many gentlemen present can estimate more correctly than myself), was on its march from a distant part of the Peishwah's territories to Poonah, soon after the denunciation of hostilities; and unexpectedly found itself in presence of the whole

Mahratta army. What was the exact amount of the Peishwah's force I am not able to state with precision, but the cavalry alone was not less than 20,000. The small band which I have described, hemmed in on all sides by this overwhelming superiority of numbers, maintained through a long day an obstinate and victorious resistance: victorious—for they repelled on every point the furious attacks of the enemy. The chief suffering of which they complained during this singular and most unequal contest, was the intolerable thirst which they could not procure the means of slaking until the action was over. In the end they not only secured an unmolested retreat, but they carried off their wounded!—In such a waste and wilderness of space and of glories, distracting the sight and perplexing the judgment, it is satisfactory thus to select some small insulated field of action, which one can comprehend at a single glance, and of which (as of some green and sunny spot in a far-stretching and diversified landscape) one can catch and delineate all the characteristic features.

From this one small achievement—small as

to extent but mighty with reference to the qualities displayed in it,—the spirit which pervaded and animated the whole Indian Army may be inferred. The officer who commanded this gallant little force, was Captain Staunton: his rank does not entitle him to be recorded in our Votes, but the House will be glad to learn that his merits and services have not been overlooked by his immediate employers the Court of Directors.

To sum up the military results of the whole campaign in a few words:—Within the short period of six months, between November and June, eight-and-twenty actions were fought in the field; differing from each other in magnitude, but all exhibiting in unvaried splendour the character of our Indian Army. One hundred and twenty forts—many of them scarcely accessible, some deemed impregnable either by force or skill,—fell to that army by surrender, by siege, or by storm. To give some notion of the extent of country over which these actions were distributed—the distance between the

most northern and most southern of the captured fortresses is not less than seven hundred miles.

At the southern extremity of this long line of operations, and in a part of the campaign carried on in a district far from public gaze and without the opportunities of early and especial notice, was employed a man, whose name I should indeed have been sorry to have passed over in silence. I allude to Col. Thomas Munro; a gentleman of whose rare qualifications the late House of Commons had opportunities of judging when he was examined at their Bar on the renewal of the East India Company's Charter;—and than whom Europe never produced a more accomplished statesman, nor India, fertile as it is in heroes, a more skilful soldier. This gentleman, whose occupations for some years past have been rather of a civil and administrative than a military nature, was called, early in the war, to exercise abilities which though dormant, had not rusted from disuse. He went into the field

with not more than five or six hundred men, of whom a very small proportion were Europeans; and marched into the Mahratta territories to take possession of the country which had been ceded to us by the treaty of Poonah. The population which he subdued by arms, he managed with such address, equity, and wisdom, that he established an empire over their hearts and feelings. Nine forts were surrendered to him or taken by assault on his way; and at the end of a silent and scarcely observed progress, he emerged from a territory heretofore hostile to the British interest, with an accession instead of a diminution of force, leaving every thing secure and tranquil behind him. This result speaks more than could be told by any minute and extended commentary.

This, however, Sir, (in order that I may keep my word with the House) is the last episode in which I shall indulge. It remains only to describe briefly the general state in which our affairs were placed at the end of the campaign. The Peishwah and the Rajah of Nag-

pore I have already traced from their unprovoked hostility to their merited chastisement. The Pindarries, the original cause and object of the war, are gone. Of the powers which had a natural interest to side with the Pindarries, Meer Khan is reduced to his original comparative insignificance; Holkar has paid the penalty of his hostility by the sacrifice of a large portion of his dominions; and the most formidable and most important of all, Scindia, having been prevented by wise management from taking that course which would justly have placed him amongst the victims of our vengeance, remains, and long may he remain, an independent sovereign. Long may he remain so!—because, anxious as I am for the prosperity and grandeur of our Indian Empire, I confess I look at its indefinite extension with awe. I earnestly wish that it may be possible for us to remain stationary where we are; and that what still exists of substantive and independent power in India, may stand untouched and unimpaired. But this consummation, however much it may

be desired, depends (as I have said) not on ourselves alone. Aggression must be repelled, and perfidy must be visited with its just reward. And while I join with the thinking part of the Country in deprecating advance,—who shall say that there is safety for such a power as ours, in retrogradation?

In one view, the accession of territory, by the various operations of which I have attempted to give some outline, is as important as the war was justifiable and necessary. In the beginning of this war the frontier to be guarded was in extent not less than two thousand five hundred miles. In consequence of our late successes, and of the tributary alliances which have grown out of them, that frontier is indeed much advanced; but in proportion as it is advanced it is also narrowed, so that the line towards the Indus does not now present more than one-third of the extent of the former external boundary.

I have thus, Sir, endeavoured to bring before

the House a review of the late campaign; and imperfect as I am aware that review must necessarily be, I do not know that I have omitted any material part of the grounds on which I found my call upon the House for a Vote of Thanks to the Marquis of Hastings. I have said enough to shew the providence with which he called forth, and the skill with which he arrayed, the forces of the great Empire committed to his charge; the wisdom with which he laid his plans, and the vigour with which he carried them into execution. I conclude with proposing the Vote to Lord Hastings as the Commander under whose auspices these successes have been achieved; but I think it due to him as a Statesman at the same time to assure the House that his most anxious wish is to improve by the arts of peace the provinces acquired in war; extending the protection of British justice to every part of our widely-spread dominions; but leaving as he may find them the harmless prejudices of nations; and conforming our government to native habits and institutions, wherever those habits and institutions

are not at variance with equity and reason: convinced that the British rule will be stable throughout India, in proportion as it is beneficent and beloved.

(Mr. Canning here read the Vote of Thanks to the Marquis of Hastings).

It is necessary that I should preface the second Resolution with a few remarks on a circumstance in the conduct of a gallant General who has greatly signalized himself in this campaign.

I mentioned, in the earlier part of my Speech, that one of the first results of Sir Thomas Hislop's victory over Holkar was an Order issued by that Chief, and intrusted to Sir T. Hislop, for the surrender of certain fortresses to the South of the River Nerbudda. Amongst the fortresses so ordered to be surrendered to Sir Thomas Hislop, was that of Talneir. At that place an event occurred which is related in the Papers before the House, and the par-

ticulars of which it is not necessary for me to repeat. In those Papers the House is possessed of all the information which the East India Company or the Government have received on this subject. With that information neither the East India Company nor the Government are satisfied. The only course which, under these circumstances, could be adopted, was to send instructions to the Government of India to transmit to England the most ample information, and to institute, if necessary, the most minute inquiry. I am very far from admitting that because there has been an omission in sending home satisfactory documents, we are therefore to conclude that the transaction is not justifiable. The inference must be the other way:—First, from the character of *a* British Officer; secondly, from the individual character of *this* Officer, whom (though I am not myself acquainted with him), I understand to be eminently entitled to praise not more for his professional talents, than for his abhorrence of every thing cruel or severe. We

have further in support of this inference, two separate approvals of his conduct by the Marquis of Hastings, conveyed in the most unqualified terms. It is impossible to imagine any interest or affection that could have induced Lord Hastings to slur over a transaction, which in his conscience he thought deserving of blame. I say this the more confidently, because instances have occurred in the course of this campaign which prove that, however anxious Lord Hastings is to bestow praise where praise is merited, he knows his duty too well to withhold blame from those who have justly incurred it. Those instances it would be unfair to mention; but I can assure the House that such are in my possession.

When the despatch which contains the account of the capture of Talneir, was transmitted in the military department of the official correspondence, it came unaccompanied with any civil details whatever. I felt some reluctance in making the bare military statement public: but I thought the plain course to pursue was, to deal

with this despatch as other despatches of a military nature had been dealt with; looking forward confidently to the arrival of the details which were wanting to give the transaction its true colour.

Those gentlemen who take an interest in Indian affairs must know how uncertain correspondence is with that part of the world. There have been—there still are—great chasms in the correspondence respecting the late campaign. In last Saturday's Gazette, is an account of occurrences which took place not less than a year and a half ago: it is not the fault of the Government that the intelligence of them did not arrive sooner. And here it may possibly be expedient for me to state, by the way, why despatches of which the general interest is gone by, are nevertheless inserted in the Gazette. The reason, Sir, is this: From the intense and laudable eagerness with which military honours are sought for, it is necessary that those services by which such honours may be merited, should be publicly recorded. Public record being made—and wisely—an indispensable condition

of the grant of those honours, it would be hard to run the risk of invalidating any Officer's title to them hereafter, by keeping back altogether the notification of services, the official report of which might have happened to be delayed.

To return to Sir Thomas Hislop: his despatch arrived in August; the approbation of the Marquis of Hastings, though dated only a fortnight after that despatch, did not arrive till the 27th of November. The details of a complete justification may be now on their way.

In this imperfect state of evidence three modes of proceeding presented themselves to Government. The first was, to withhold remuneration altogether from the services of the Indian army till this point should be cleared up: but no man who knows the spirit and temper of armies in general, and the composition of the Indian army in particular, would recommend a course so ungrateful and ungracious. The next was to grant to other deservers the proper honorary rewards, omit-

ting the name of the Commander under whom the most considerable victory had been gained —the name of him in whose praise the letters from India were lavish: but such an exception would have placed on his character a stamp of obloquy too deep to be effaced by any subsequent atonement. The last course was, to include him with the body of officers to whom military honours were due; still, however, expecting and requiring at a future period a satisfactory explanation of this particular part of his conduct.—If the House shall be of opinion that the Executive Government have not judged amiss in the choice which they have made between these three modes of proceeding, the House will, perhaps, so far countenance and concur with their decision as to vote its Thanks for military service to Lieut. General Sir Thomas Hislop, in common with his brave compeers in glory; and to be contented with entering, at the same time, a special record of its own suspended judgment on this particular transaction.

I admit the reasonableness of such a record, on the grounds which I have stated; though I feel that, standing in my situation, it would hardly be becoming in me to propose what that record shall be. To join it with the Vote of Thanks itself, when every end can be obtained by a separate Resolution, would be as harsh as unnecessary:—unnecessary, since the suspension of the judgment of the House may be sufficiently marked without such a junction;—and harsh, because the Vote of Thanks will be placed on the regimental books, and read in front of every military line in India. This, I am ready to confess, would not be too severe a course if the transaction were finally to be imprinted with a character, such as, I trust, it never can assume: but what would be the feelings of Sir Thomas Hislop and of his comrades, if such a censure were sent forth, in ignorance here, to be read before an audience in India who might well know that it had not been deserved?

I trust, then, that the House will allow the name of Sir Thomas Hislop to stand in my second Resolution of Thanks, without any

phrase of qualification; and in return, if any Gentleman shall propose a separate Resolution of the description which I have ventured to suggest, I shall think that by assenting to such Resolution I best discharge my duty to the House, to the Indian army, and to Sir Thomas Hislop himself.

THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS WERE THEN VOTED:

1*st*, "*That the Thanks of this House be given to General the Marquis of Hastings, Knight of the Most noble Order of the Garter, and Knight Grand Cross of the Most honourable Military Order of the Bath, Governor-General of the British Possessions in the East Indies, and Commander-in-Chief of the Forces there, for the promptitude and vigour displayed by him in the overthrow and suppression of the Pindarries; and for those eminently-skilful and judicious military arrangements which enabled him to defeat the hostile aggressions of the Mahratta Princes, in a Campaign marked*

by a series of brilliant and decisive successes, highly honourable to the British arms."

2d, "*That the Thanks of this House be given to Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Hislop, Knight Grand Cross of the Most honourable Military Order of the Bath, Major-Generals Sir Dyson Marshall, Knight, Commander of the Most honourable Military Order of the Bath, Sir Rufane Shaw Donkin, K. C. B., Sir William Grant Keir, and Thomas Browne; Brigadier-Generals Thomas Munro, Companion of the Most honourable Military Order of the Bath, John Doveton, C. B., Sir John Malcolm, K. C. B., Lionel Smith, C. B., and to the several Officers engaged in the late operations in the East Indies for their indefatigable zeal and exertion throughout a long and eventful Campaign.*"

3d, "*That this House doth highly approve and acknowledge the general discipline and bravery displayed by the Non-Commissioned Officers and Private Soldiers, both European and*

Native, employed in the late Campaign in the East Indies, and that the same be signified to them by the Commanders of the several Corps, who are desired to thank them for their gallant behaviour."

THE END.

Printed by W. Clowes, Northumberland-court, Strand.