

EAST-INDIA HOUSE.

Yesterday there was a General Quarterly Court of Proprietors held, for the purpose of receiving the Report of the Court of Directors, respecting the Dividend on East-India Stock, for the half-year ending at Christmas; the Pension voted to Sir NATHANIEL DANCE; and the settlement of the Government of Prince of Wales's Island.

ESTABLISHMENT OF PRINCE OF WALES'S ISLAND IN SUNDA STREIGHTS.

The CHAIRMAN reported to the Court, that the Court of Directors had come to the resolution of establishing the Government of the Settlement of Prince of Wales's Island upon the same footing as the other Governments of the Company's Settlements in India, by the establishment of a Governor, Council, &c. which, after many years experience, and the most mature deliberation, was found absolutely necessary, in order to render that island of real advantage to the Company's possessions in the Eastern part of India, and productive to their commerce and revenue. The Secretary read the report, stating the several official stations resolved to be appointed, with salaries thereunto annexed. The CHAIRMAN entered into a statement of the motives which induced the Court to adopt this settlement. The island had been in their possession, he said, since the time of Sir John M'Pherson's earnest recommendation of its importance, eighteen years; and had in fact been productive to the Company of considerable expence. The proposed establishment, however, was designed and calculated to render it of high importance, both in a commercial and political point of view. The intention was to form it into a naval arsenal for the ships of war on that station; for it contained not only an extensive bason, capable of holding the greatest number of ships we could possibly at any time have occasion for in that quarter of the globe, but it abounded in ship-timber, and was extremely convenient to Pegu, which contained the most extensive forests of Peak-wood in all Asia. It afforded, beside, what the Company's trade extremely wanted in that quarter; namely, a windward port for the protection of their trade, and further defence of their settlements from invasion; to which, from the want of such a port, they were often exposed for many months together; the ships, for their defence, being obliged to go to a vast distance to refit. It was a situation extremely convenient for the Malay trade; it commanded the whole trade of the coast of Coromandel and bay of Bengal, and was well adapted to form an emporium for the whole commerce of India on the eastern side. Its produce in pepper alone was from one to two hundred thousand tons a year; whilst, from Bencoolen, which cost the Company such immense sums of money, the produce in this article never exceeded three cargoes in a year. With respect to the establishment proposed, though, from the number of official situations just read over, it might appear that this was an official establishment, totally new, yet he could assure the Court, that there was scarcely one official situation added to the num-

ber which already existed in the island; that the salaries annexed, though apparently high, were but moderately liberal, considering the expences those Officers respectively must be unavoidably exposed to in the country; and that they must be strictly excluded from all commerce, by which means only the settlement could become lucrative to the Company. He added, that for any expences incurred for the accommodation of Government in that quarter, the Company would be reimbursed by the Government at home; that, however, it would be the object of the Company cautiously to feel their way, in the course of their progress, and not launch, in the first instance, into an expensive system, upon mere experiment, but let experience alone point out the occasion for progressive expenditure. This measure was deemed necessary upon the follicit deliberation by the Court of Directors, who had given him instructions to form an arrangement upon the subject, upon which he, and his worthy Deputy were actually employed, when they received an application from Government upon the subject. With a very great part of the papers which had passed on this subject, much political reasoning was blended, which he trusted the Proprietors at large would feel it would not be wise to expose even to their, much less to the public, eye. For the present, he presumed, it would not be desirable to go into any discussion upon the subject, as Gentlemen would be better prepared to discuss it at a future day. He should, according to the ordinary usage, move, that the Resolutions be now approved, subject to the consideration of the next Court of Proprietors.

Mr. JOHNSON wished to know if this motion was meant as an introduction to any discussion on the subject now, or if it was meant to postpone all discussion to a future day? He conceived, from the short time the Court was in possession of what had been just read to them, upon a subject of so much importance, they could not now be prepared to go into the discussion. But in all events, he should object to the word *approve*, in respect to resolutions which had not been examined, nor any time whatever taken to consider a subject of so much importance.

The CHAIRMAN said, the motion for approval was merely *pro forma* pending a future discussion, and bound no man to implicit concurrence on a future day. He had no objection now to hear the sentiments of any Gentleman on the subject.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN was of the same opinion with respect to the motion of approval *pro forma*, and spoke at length in support of the Chairman's statement with respect to the importance and necessity of the proposed establishment.

Mr. KEMBLE asked, if pepper was the only valuable produce to be expected from the establishment? If so, pepper was already so plenty, and at so low a price, that the Company lost by it.

Mr. JOHNSON was against the formation of so expensive an establishment, without some better and more explicit grounds were stated in support of it. He was also against any reliance on the

promises of Government, who, he said, had so often broken faith with the Company. He supposed they wanted, in the present instance, only to deprive the Company of their right of patronage; to thrust their hands into the Company's pocket, and induce them to incur expences which they never would reimburse. If he thought the measure was the pure suggestion of the Board of Directors themselves, he should be inclined to give it his confidence and support, from his opinion of their integrity; but suspecting it to be rather an instruction from his Majesty's Ministers, he was, in the first instance, against its adoption. With respect, however, to the boasted advantages of this settlement, he was at a loss what to say upon the slight information already before the Court. If his information was right, however, the Island produced no large ship-timber, and the tide rose but nine feet, which rendered it unfit for docks; and as to the necessity for making this situation a naval arsenal, he was astonished to find that after all that had been said of the importance and competency of Trincomale, it should now be passed over as of no importance whatever.

The CHAIRMAN said, that with respect to the article of pepper, it was a commodity with which this market must be supplied by the Company, or they would not deserve to hold their charter a week. Though low now, it would not always be so. It was an article which the Company's warehouses could not be without; and no man would be more clamorous under the want of a supply than the Gentleman who made the objection. With respect to what had fallen from another Gentleman, he could assure him the measure was not the result of an instruction from Government; and that no instructions, not even from that Court, would induce him to adopt a measure he did not approve. With respect to the timber of the island, he could assure them it produced it in abundance, large enough for ships of eight hundred tons. As to the subject of the nine feet tide, there was not an Engineer on the river Thames, who could not tell him, that could be no impediment to the formation of docks, if they were necessary; a circumstance by no means resolved upon in the present case, as some of the first naval arsenals in Europe were without docks.

Mr. SEALY said, it was very indifferent to him who suggested the measure, provided it was a good one; and suppose it had come from his Majesty's Ministers, who were more competent to judge of its importance and necessity?

After some further desultory dispute, the motion of the CHAIRMAN passed, and the discussion was appointed for Friday, the 4th of January.

Another Motion was made, and seconded by Mr. JOHNSON, for requesting that the Papers deemed necessary by the Directors, for the information of the Court, preparatory to discussion, be printed; which was rejected upon a shew of hands, and the Court adjourned.