

SKETCH

DRAWN FROM THE RECORDS

OF THE

British Factory at St. Petersburg,

AND DESIGNED TO ELUCIDATE

THE HISTORY OF THAT BODY.

From 1716 to 1824.

“Certainly it is Heaven upon Earth, to have
“A Man’s mind move in Charity, rest in Providence,
“And turn upon the Poles of Truth.”—BACON.

“God be our good guide.”

MOTTO OF THE RUSSIA COMPANY.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. F. DOVE, ST. JOHN’S SQUARE.

1824.

Leplin



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SKETCH

FROM

THE RECORDS OF THE BRITISH FACTORY

AT

ST. PETERSBURG.

I HAVE been induced to attempt the following Sketch of the History of the British Factory at St. Petersburg, from a thorough conviction that certain allegations, relative to that body and its chapel, as stated in an Act of Parliament passed in England, and printed in June, 1823, intituled, “An Act to declare valid certain Marriages that have been solemnized at St. Petersburg, since the Abolition of the British Factory there,”—are entirely unfounded; and can easily be refuted, by evidence drawn from authentic sources.

Indeed the alleged abolition of the Factory, and the assertions consequent on that allegation, to be found in the Act of Parliament alluded to, are so contrary to the facts of the case, as they exist under our daily observation, that any refutation of them would be unnecessary, were it not to be apprehended that a document emanating from such high authority,

may have considerable weight, if not now, possibly at some future period, with those persons who are not well enough acquainted with the history of the Factory, and the contents of the Manifest of 1807 (on which it is presumed the framers of the Act of Parliament have founded their erroneous statements), to be aware what clear proofs can be given of the uninterrupted existence of the Factory, from the year 1716 until the present day.

With a view to dispel all doubts on the subject, it is my intention to lay before my readers such extracts from the Records kept by the Factory, from the last Treaty of Commerce, and from the Manifest of 1st January, 1807, as will display all the bearings of the case, accompanied by occasional observations on the subject, as the matter rises before me, whereby I hope to be able to shew,

1st. The origin and nature of the Factory as a body.

2ndly. Its continued existence under every change of circumstances, not only in the estimation of the Russia Company, and of the British Government, but also in that of the government of this country, from its original establishment up to the present time; and,

3rdly. Its rights with regard to its highly respectable Church establishment.

Being actuated by no other motives in undertaking this task, than a desire to elucidate the truth, and to be of service to a body of men whom I most sincerely

respect and esteem, I trust I can safely rely on the indulgence of my readers, for a candid consideration of my remarks, and on their excuse for the defects in style and composition, which will be found in the following Sketch.

I am not aware in what year the British merchants were first embodied at Archangel, as the earliest records now in their possession commence only with the year 1716 ; but it may be presumed, that they had already been there for some time, before they became regularly organised as a body, and adopted the plan of keeping minutes of their proceedings, as there are now in the possession of the Factory, covers for a communion table and pulpit, on which are embroidered inscriptions, stating, that they were presented to the church by Charles Goodfellow, British consul in those parts, in 1706 ; also, a church register, commencing in the same year.

The first meeting on record was held at the house of their treasurer, on the 30th April, 1716, and was styled, a Meeting of the British Company. On that occasion they fixed a rate on the amount of goods imported and exported, and a port-charge on British ships ; and “ resolved to write for a minister, his salary to be 100*l.* per year, free house and firing, and his travelling expenses to Archangel, and from thence to Moscow.” In March, 1719, at a meeting in Moscow of the persons who met at Archangel in 1716, the resolution on the subject of writing for a chap-

lain was confirmed ; and it appears, that until the trade was removed to St. Petersburg, it was the practice of the Factory to reside at Archangel during the summer, and at Moscow during the winter months ; having a church or chapel at each place, their minister moving with them, and officiating in both cities.

By the minutes of a meeting held at Archangel, 12th November, 1717, it appears, that they had procured a chaplain ; and a resolution was passed, “ that the chaplain be desired to offer up petitions in his prayer before the sermon, for his Czarish Majesty, and for the British Factory residing in these parts.” In this we have the first proof on record of the Factory having acquired that title ; and it is gratifying to reflect, that it was ushered into notice, on an occasion so solemn, as a prayer to the Almighty, in the church which they had founded.

From that period, until 1723, the Records contain little besides the necessary regulations of charges raised for the support of the church.

His imperial majesty, Peter the Great, having been pleased to remove the trade from Archangel to Petersburg, the Factory moved to this city, and held their first meeting here in 1723.*

The Records shew, in the clearest possible light, that the principal objects which, from the first, en-

* “ The church plate, books, and ornaments for the chapel were, on this occasion, delivered to one of the treasurers, to be sent to St. Petersburg, to remain at the disposal of the Factory.”

gaged the attention of the Factory, at their meetings, were, the maintenance of their church establishment, and the regulating of charges on British ships, and on goods : and that such have continued to be, almost exclusively, the subjects of their deliberations, from that period up to the present time. It is to this cause that we must attribute the fact, that the church establishment has always been the bond of union in the Factory ; and there is not a doubt but their respectability in the eyes of the government of this country, and of all classes of the community, has been materially heightened, by the manner in which that establishment has invariably been conducted.

From 1716 until 1728, no mention is made in the Records of there being any consul, or agent, from the Russia Company in this country ; and up to the latter date, the Factory conducted their affairs, maintained their church, engaged and discharged their chaplains, and fixed their rates of charges on ships and goods, without any reference to the Russia Company, although it has been shewn above, that there was a British consul at Archangel in 1706.

In 1728, Thomas Ward, Esq. is first mentioned as his Britannic Majesty's consul and agent general, and the Factory were then in communication with him. Having discharged their chaplain, they desired he would write for another for them ; " his appointment to be 600 roubles per annum, with free house, his travelling expenses from England by ship-

ping to be paid by the Factory, and whenever the Factory may discharge him, his charges back to England also to be paid."

I observe by the minutes of a meeting held in March, 1731, that no chaplain had been procured at that date; and the Factory resolved, that their treasurers should be ordered to write for one, to Robert Nettleton, Esq. one of their members, who was then in England.

In 1729, the Factory sent to the consul and agent (who was then with the court at Moscow) copies of the several representations given in by them to the colleges here; and it appears from a letter addressed to him by Samuel Holden, Esq. governor of the Russia Company, that the Factory was already in correspondence with the Company, about charges and port-charges; into the latter of which was admitted an item for the Company's agent (according to a plan sent by the Factory, for the Company's confirmation), the allowance to the agent being made, as the governor's letter states, "as a testimony of our good-will, and inducement to you, to exert yourself for whatever may contribute to the advantage of the Company, the welfare of the Factory, and honour of the nation." In the same year, the governor sent to the agent a list of the freemen of the Russia Company, "in order to prevent un-freemen from trading to or from this place."

From the year 1742 until 1745 the Factory did not appoint treasurers from their own body, but em-