

Ed. Keaira to Col. Beckham

A.A. No. 521

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Ed. Keaira to Col. Beckham, July 22<sup>d</sup> 1815.

My Dear Friend

You know me well enough  
to believe that I could not take up my pen  
to write in disparagement of any one without  
sincere pain. Unforced as is my reluctance  
to do it in the present instance, it is absolute-  
ly necessary that I should apprise you of  
Sir George Blyden's hostility towards me & let  
you know the unworthy cause of it. A person  
in a position at Calcutta to have heard much

writes to a friend in his camp that Sir J. Hayes  
has gone home skin-full of venom against Lord at  
China". Language held by him before his em-  
-barkation, & communicated to me I can por-  
-tend without distortion, will confirm the  
description. After the manner in which I had  
net all his inelegant recommendations of in-  
-dividuals, I certainly had not to expect this  
tone. There is, however, a motive for it. But it is  
one of so wretchedly shallow a kind that nothing  
but the necessity of furnishing you with a key

Ld. Keaira to Col. Beckahow

A.A. No. 521

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to his representations which he may attempt  
at home could induce me to impart it to you.

When he had fixed to take his Passage home  
Sir George without any previous intimation call-  
ed upon General Murray to pay to him the  
amount of the fees received for Campaigns  
served during the whole time Sir George was  
Com<sup>d</sup> in Chief. So unexpected a demand astonish-  
ed Murray, who had till then been left in  
the persuasion that the money was entirely  
his own. Vexatful however, whether he might

not have decided himself respecting his title  
 to the endowment, Murray wrote to Major Doyle  
 to learn how the latter stood with me as to  
 these fees. Doyle, tho' in the same camp with  
 me, thought it most delicate on a question  
 affecting his own pecuniary interest to en-  
 -quire by letter how he was to regard this point  
 which had never come into discussion be-  
 -tween us. I answered by a note, saying that I  
 had never entered on the subject with him because  
 I had conceived it settled by usage that the  
 fees were the legitimate perquisites of the holder

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Secretary. I did not in the most distant manner  
 allude to Sir George's demand (tho' Doyle had menti-  
 -oned it as the reason for his engaging) but simply  
 referred to the matter as between Doyle & me.  
 And Major Doyle agrees so solemnly that in  
 his answer to Henry he did not state an  
 opinion as any decision on an appeal, or as  
 having on Sir George's procedure, but confined  
 himself to communicating a view of how  
 the case stood between him / Doyle / & me. Hen-  
 -ry, on receiving Doyle's letter, declined sub-  
 -mission to Sir George's claim. I must believe

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that it was not the disappointment alone which  
rendered Sir George so violent, but that he  
supposed some sort of censure on his grasp-  
-ing attempt was involved in my forbearing  
to take similar ground with him: not only  
there was no expression of a line which had the  
remotest shade of that quality, but the concept-  
-ion never came across me: but I firmly believed  
Sir George to have been sensible of my unwear-  
-ing attentions, & till the moment of my leav-  
-ing Calcutta I had been as industriously courted

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by him & her Ladyship. The eagerness which they  
have lately exhibited, thro' the care of his Inheri-  
-tance he applies to see for further favors to his  
Proteges, has been communicated thro' too many  
channels for a doubt to <sup>be</sup> entertained on the  
subject. As this disposition will be speed-  
-ly indulged by them when they get home,  
it is expedient for you to know what  
prompts their avidity;

For some time back I have been in a state  
of most painful anxiety. The public papers will  
have informed you of our war with Spain; a

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contest bequeathed to me by my Predecessor. I am  
so far from blaming him for the steps which in-  
-duced it that I have only to say there was  
not sufficiently early decision in repressing the  
encroachments of a Government growing  
fast into formidable power, & acting always  
with a degree of wily speculation which <sup>cannot</sup>  
give a high opinion of their policy. When  
the die was thrown by them, I dealt in each  
quarter the same estimate on the ground of  
every information to be requisite for making  
impression on the particular point. A notice



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repugnance to appear as if I were seeking best  
opportunities for distinguishing myself and  
as far bear without taking the conduct of any of  
the Divisions. There were four of them. Colonel [unclear]  
his General/Adjutant [unclear] commanded the Western  
-most, destined to strike against the best force  
of the Enemy. He has proceeded with success;  
but with incomparable slowness, which in our  
case was serious disadvantage. Poor Gillespie  
commanded the next Division. He's under [unclear]  
-ten instructions against risking assaults against  
Works, when a breach had not been made, [unclear]

tho' that general warning had been made speci-  
-fic with regard to Kalenga, he attempted to  
carry that fortress by storm. Repulse was inevi-  
-table, for there was no possible way of getting into  
the fort. He unfortunately fell. Had he survived  
he would have prevented his Division from falling  
itself into fear. As it was, part of the troops  
who had behaved remarkably ill vindicated  
their shyness by expatiating on the unexampled  
courage shown by the Enemy; as if there were  
any peculiar degree of valor in the continuing on  
the top of a high rampart when the assailant

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has not the possibility of getting at you. This opi-  
-sion of the heavy breach so current that when  
the second assault took place, or rather was or-  
-dered, there was no getting the Officers to follow  
their Officers to a breach up which a Coach  
might have been driven. These two failures pro-  
-duced such an impression on an Officers part  
on the heap to the Eastward that they literally  
persuaded themselves there was no dealing with  
an Army of such vigor without a had over-  
-whelming number. The best westerly of the  
two remaining Divisions was commanded by Major

General Wood of the King's Service. He is a <sup>very</sup>  
-ally gentlemanlike man, & shows much taste for  
military arrangement. he luckily he has no enemy  
After dawdling away precious time, to collect  
poor equipments which could be of no use to  
him in his earlier operations, he was forced to  
move by a letter which left him no option.  
Why in an attack on the Boston Post, he re-  
-tired without having suffered any thing like  
repulse, I never yet have been able to make out  
unless it were that he had really found the way  
at a place where he had been officed he would

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meet him. As far as his troops were engaged at all they were successful & had driven the enemy before them. He judged it expedient to send a detachment & retired without the enemy making the smallest attempt to harass him. The difficulty of deciding against the judgement of an Officer to whose discretion the management of troops is confided, the persuasion that this could not be regarded as a check & that he would instantly make an attempt elsewhere, above all disinclination to be censorious where there was the hope that a contrary procedure might stimulate exertion,

made me repress all criticism. I cheered him up  
-der the disappointment of opposing him I did not  
regard the event as in any way discreditable, &  
I endeavored to animate him with expressions of  
confidence. In vain. Not an effort has been  
-sincerely made; but he excuses his inactivity  
by the assurance that he believes the Energy  
is his point to be eight or ten times his  
-ter, a fact utterly inconceivable to the  
distribution of the Energy's force elsewhere &  
the state of their population. He will be removed

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under pretence of entrusting him with another  
command, only by order that he find his com-  
-mand in some active operation. But the his-  
-tory, to which I will advert presently, & that  
of his general Mackay, of the Company's Service,  
commanded the South Division. With the same  
dilatoriness, no investigations could get him for-  
-ward at the time destined for his advance.  
While he was delaying, the Country in his way  
was cleared for him by a successful attempt  
of Major Bradshaw's. Instead of profiting by

the event & making a rapid movement forward  
he sends in advance two weak detachments,  
He stations them at forty miles asunder, &  
he leaves them without any support within  
twenty-five miles of either. He remains wholly inactive  
in his retired camp for three weeks, during which  
time these two Posts continue under the Enemy's nose  
in the skirt of a forest without a bark of any  
kind to cover them. At length, the Enemy appears  
& has been shamed into the resolution of  
attacking these sacrificed Parties. The attempt  
succeeded so far as that the detachments were



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beaten from the Posts with considerable loss.  
 But, after the Enemy had been made to pay my  
 Dear for his advantage, the remainder of  
 each Detachment made good its retreat.

The affair was executed this morning.

A forward movement of our Army would  
 have established every thing. Instead of  
 such an effort, Major Harley gives to the bas-  
 -ness the character of a Defeat, counteracts  
 every British rumor about hundreds of regular  
 troops opposed to him, & literally terrifies his  
 Officers (who oppose him to have correct information)

by the exhibition of his own claims. I have  
- moved him from his (concord), but the mischief  
was done. It is not only that we have made no  
progress in that part & must therefore look to  
another Campaign. We have given the Enemy  
an opinion of themselves that our endeavours  
will be resisted very differently from what  
they heretofore would have been. Failure  
against this being would be ruin to that  
opinion of our Power which is the main  
stay of our Indian Empire. Very disposable  
Battalions was, therefore, to be hurried to

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support the efforts demanded for repairing  
our discredit. No such force, however, could  
be collected without absolutely ruining  
- if our Southern & Western Frontiers, and  
this at a time when exaggerated notions  
of our embarrassment in the European  
War excited the envidy & speculations  
of all the Predatory Powers. Not at this  
moment, there occurred the repulse of  
two detachments employed by his General  
Monti-dell who succeeded Gillespie. The

of these was foiled by mere accident. Another  
Detachment was subjected to severe loss & the  
appearance of Defeat by the General's trans-  
-mitting Orders to it / from the distance of  
Seven Miles / to retreat from a Position in  
which it had baffled the assaults of the  
Enemy during the whole Day. The connection  
which ensued among our Neighbors on their  
reiterated Mischances / magnified by their  
in-bisiness Defeat was truly alarming. Sen-  
-sible, whose practices had for some time  
been secretly active against us, took a bolder  
tone. As if indifferent to the light in which

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we might view his procedure, he unduly entered  
-ed into engagements with the Rajah of Mys-  
-ore that they should jointly conquer the petty  
State of Bhepaul which forms a barrier  
between their territories. This project was  
in effect to draw away the main provision of  
the Treaty by which the Mahratta War was  
concluded; for, it went at once to remove that  
Mahratta Conspiracy which it was the great  
object of the Treaty to extinguish. Were the  
State of Bhepaul subdued, the inability of  
the Rajah of Mysore left his Army & his  
Revenues wholly at the disposal of Sindia,

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I do not think he entertained of his employ-  
-ing them means directly against us. As the  
only chance of avoiding a war to be expected  
on every consideration, the application of  
the proposal of Shepaul (long met with a  
deaf ear) was taken up, & he was inform-  
-ed that he might on certain conditions be  
received under British Protection as a Pen-  
-sionary. This was announced to Sindral as  
a matter supposed to be indifferent to him.  
He met the communication intemperately  
and he regarded the treaty between us as

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broken; & declared that he considered each Par-  
-ty as at liberty to act according to its own  
-notion of expedience, & that explicit pro-  
-position, so unlike the tempering habits of  
the Mahometans, succeeded an avowal from  
the Rajah of Mysore purporting that  
he had sent a Vakeel to Seindiah to ask  
-advice & was to be guided by the latter's coun-  
-sel. Precisely at the same juncture, per-  
-fecting advised a large army to appear there  
on that spot on the banks of the Attley  
whence he had before invaded the Conitaries

on this side of that river: and to complete  
the whole, Meer Khan (a noted Pindar  
Chief) collected an army on the borders of  
Seypan only twelve marches from Delhi. The  
whole of our disposable force had been dis-  
patched from the Southern & Eastern Pen-  
-sion to remedy the disasters in Rajput,  
& some ultimate success: because failure  
in that war would lead to rapid ruin. A  
contest which should have, the Rajput with  
unimpaired resources, with augmented confidence,  
& with implacable hostility, could have had  
one most speedy result. A reversal of it would



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take place as soon as measures could be ~~taken~~ <sup>adopted</sup>  
 to avert an attack upon us by the Mahometans  
 at the same time. Swedish, even on the  
 watch to break our power, would desire no-  
 thing so earnestly as that concerted op-  
 -eration. That some understanding of the  
 sort did actually exist, I firmly believe:  
 but it was not concerted, & the sudden de-  
 -cision with which we engaged ourselves  
 for the outrage committed upon us by the  
 Danes prevented the degree of prepara-  
 -tion on the part of our neighbours which was

requisite for the security of such a scheme.  
Still, the Sindiah was not in complete re-  
-diness, disposition to take advantage of an  
- supposed, embarrassment was not deprived.  
I found myself with a Frontier Detachment of  
- troops, & without the assistance of an army  
- for the field, expecting hardly the eruption  
- of swarms of Depredators into our Province.  
I had nothing for it but to take all on my-  
- self. I ordered instant Levies to the great-  
- est extent that practicability of recruit-  
- ing & on command of hands would allow,

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We collected a comparative degree of strength  
very rapidly; yet it is only a comparative  
one. To give you a notion of what was our  
situation, I will describe the best of it  
at this moment. Should Chacur Khan  
invade us, I must risk every thing &  
meet him instantly. All our spies & ad-  
-lateral informants represent Chacur Khan  
as having 30,000 men under his command;  
and some native officers who have brought  
off their men from his very Camp confirm

the statement. Still I think the number  
exaggerated; but there can be no question  
of his having above 20,000 actual fighting  
men. These are not battalions. The whole of his  
Cavalry has been employed in continued  
service for some years. The Brigades of Infantry  
belonging to Mahmud Shah Khan, who  
serves under Akbar Khan, were formed  
by the Sepoys when we discharged them in-  
-sidentally after the Malakka war, and  
fashioned exactly upon our plan, & are trained  
as of equal discipline with that of our

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Native Infantry. Mohamad Shah's Artillery,  
 trained by our discharged Gunners, is upon the  
 same excellent footing. Between Holkar's  
 Artillery, which Meer Khan has with him,  
 & Mohamad Shah's, Meer Khan has more  
 - by a Hundred Pieces of Cannon. Now, with  
 what force will I oppose this formidable  
 body if they advance towards? Including  
 by your heart, I cannot muster more  
 than four thousand men, Cavalry, Infantry, &  
 Artillery; and at the head of that num-  
 -ber I must stake every thing. If I can

gain at a little time, I shall put all  
into a state of security; but I am gaining  
that time by appearing on the renewed  
frontier with an air of cool confidence  
which checks the speculations of our ene-  
-mies while it hells the apprehensions of  
our own people. It is true, I have more force  
altogether than what I state; for, in what  
I said above, I refer only to what I can  
at the moment draw from memory &  
the two nearest journals, leaving the latter to

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the too doubtful care of irregulars raised for  
the crisis. There is a body of Cavalry of 4000  
-fourty, at Compo, but I do not expect  
them, even were it practicable for them  
to reach me in time. I do not think I  
see there the nucleus on which an Army  
could be suddenly formed, he would be  
upon us immediately. I repeat that  
by a good horse countenance I have kept  
off the danger; & I only believe we shall  
have no war on this Frontier. Had I not

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happened to be here, the alarm would have been  
so general & so wild that it would of itself  
have been an irresistible temptation to the  
Enemy. Let me not, however, ascribe to myself  
the merit of keeping off all the danger.  
I have only dissuaded Amur Khan from his  
meditated enterprise by an air of indifference  
which made him imagine that I had guards  
of confidence beyond what he could calculate.  
I am watched at every step, nay I know the  
individuals who are spies in my camp, but if  
I can impose upon them by circulating a



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man, such as I wish, should reach their em-  
ployers the proximity of these Gentry is an  
advantage to me. I get continually from the  
Camp of Sindiah, Holkar, & Meer Khan, the  
accounts transmitted to them respecting all  
I do, & I assure you the details, colored as  
the are by the Emperour, are very amusing.  
But I am wandering from my point. Nature  
interfered for us in the most marvellous way.  
Two of Sindiah's Generals, each at the head  
of an Army, quarrelled & came to a battle. The  
one who was defeated, with the loss of several

Pieces of Council happened to have a good Military  
Chest, & he immediately subdivided a body  
of the Pindaries who otherwise might very  
possibly have tried their fortunes on an In-  
-dependent district. Sindiah has not yet been  
able to heal this breach. Of course he was  
embarrassed. The King of Cabul, with whom  
we have not had intercourse for a long time  
& whom we could not influence, suddenly set  
up some antiquated claims against Ranjeet  
Sing, sent a threatening message to him, &  
expected an army to give it weight. The

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consequence was, that Kungjet by hastened  
 to move his troops to his Capital & dispatched  
 an Envoy with a splendid retinue to say how  
 pained he was that urgent affairs prevented  
 - at his coming in person to visit me &  
 to assure me of inviolable friendship.

In short, I am now breathing freely again.  
 It is true, there may be an outward dog  
 to work thro' if Amur Khan takes heart  
 & comes upon us speedily; but then the  
 complication of impending danger is so far  
 short of what it was that I feel con-

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-partable from the comparison. This Henry will  
have been so unsuspected by the Directors / not  
so by me / that it will have come like a  
Thunder Clap upon them. They will see, however,  
that no policy could have prevented the se-  
-thering of the Clouds, & perhaps they may  
think that in such a crisis their affairs have  
not been managed in a deserving way. I look  
to much good out of this bustle.

Adieu. Henry grateful & affectionate  
to the Prince Regent; and believe me my Friends  
I am  
John Macpherson  
Faithfully yours  
The Earl