

CHAPTER XI.

BRITISH POSSESSIONS IN ASIA, IN A CHRISTIAN, POLITICAL, AND
COMMERCIAL POINT OF VIEW.

THE Christian and the moralist who is accustomed to trace in the records of past ages the beneficent dispensations of the Supreme Disposer of events, as regards man in his collective as well as individual state, will not fail to perceive, that since the time of Elizabeth, England has risen from a small insulated kingdom to a vast maritime empire totally different in formation, and in constitution from any dominion that has heretofore been established on earth, and it will also be seen (by the subsequent volumes of this work) that no part of this unparalleled empire is more deserving of deep consideration in a philanthropic, political or commercial point of view, than the British possessions in Asia. As travellers are wont, when ascending a lofty eminence, to pause and contemplate the scene above and beneath, let me entreat the reader, who has accompanied the author through the foregoing unavoidably monotonous detail of facts, to reflect on by-gone events. I will suppose him a Christian (and of course a philanthropist) intensely solicitous for the dissemination of the pure and mild precepts of religion, and desirous of extending the blessings of education among untaught millions, and of rescuing the land of the heathen from the dark and degrading idolatry in which it was unhappily plunged, amidst a sea of misery and vice: to such an individual I would say, how rapid, how strange, how incredible almost has been the rise and progress of the British power in the east. We first visited its picturesque and fertile shores as a race of needy adventurers, thirsting for gain, and perhaps but little scrupulous as to the means by which it was to be acquired; in a brief space of time we rose from petty traders to be sovereigns over