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The Afghan question: speeches of the Earl of Northbrook in the House of Lords, on the 5th and 10th December, 1878

Thomas George Baring Northbrook

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Edward Stanhope

THE AFGHAN QUESTION.

SPEECHES

OF THE

EARL OF NORTHBROOK

IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

On the 5th and 10th of December, 1878 ;

AND

MEMORANDUM

ON

VISCOUNT CRANBROOK'S DESPATCH
TO LORD LYTTON

OF NOVEMBER 18TH, 1878.

MEMORANDUM

ON VISCOUNT CRANBROOK'S DESPATCH.

When I read Lord Cranbrook's despatch to Lord Lytton of the 18th of November, I thought that it would give an incorrect impression of the negotiations which took place in 1873 between the Government of India, when I was Viceroy, and the Prime Minister of Shere Ali. I have now had an opportunity of consulting the papers which have been published by Her Majesty's Government, and my opinion remains the same.

The account given in the despatch* seems to me to imply that in 1873, Shere Ali, influenced by his fear of Russia, asked for assurances of protection from the Government of India, which I wished to give, but that I was prevented by orders from home.

This is, in fact, the construction that has generally been

* I refer to the following extract from Lord Cranbrook's despatch of the 18th of November, 1873, Afghanistan Papers, p. 262 :—

"8. The capture of Khiva by the forces of the Czar in the spring of 1873, and the total subordination of that Khanate to Russia, caused Shere Ali considerable alarm, and led him to question the value of the pledges with reference to Afghanistan which had been given by His Imperial Majesty to England, and which had been communicated to His Highness by the British Government. Actuated by his fears on this score, His Highness sent a special envoy to Simla in the summer of that year, charged with the duty of expressing them to the Government of India.

"9. Finding that the object of the Ameer was to ascertain definitely how far he might rely on the help of the British Government if his territories were threatened by Russia, Lord Northbrook's Government was prepared [telegram from Viceroy, 24th July, 1873] to assure him that, under certain conditions, the Government of India would assist him to repel unprovoked aggression. But Her Majesty's Government at home did not share [telegram to Viceroy, 26th July, 1873] His Highness's apprehension, and the Viceroy ultimately informed the Ameer that the discussion of the question would be best postponed to a more convenient season." [Letter from Viceroy, 6th September, 1873, in Secret Letter, No. 75, dated 15th September, 1873.]

put upon the words used by Lord Cranbrook; and, as I am perfectly acquainted with the facts of the case, I think it is right, in common justice to the Government under which I then served, to explain as clearly as I can what really occurred.

In the beginning of the year 1873 it became necessary to obtain the consent of Shere Ali to an arbitration which the British Government had undertaken between Persia and Afghanistan, with respect to the frontier of those countries in the province of Seistan. I also wished to inform him of the particulars of the recognition given by Russia to the Afghan frontier. I suggested, therefore, that he should receive at Cabul a British officer who would be able to explain these matters to him. His reply was that if I wished it he would receive a British officer, but that it would in his opinion be more convenient if, in the first place at any rate, his Prime Minister should wait upon me at Simla, in order to hear what I wished to communicate to him. I acceded at once to his suggestion, and his Prime Minister, Noor Mahomed Shah, came to Simla in the summer of 1873. Shere Ali had, about the same time, stated to the British Agent at Cabul that he was much alarmed at the advance of Russia in the direction of Merve, and that he was anxious for more positive assurances of protection from the Government of India against Russia than he had hitherto received. He therefore authorised his Prime Minister to take the opportunity of communicating to me his views upon that subject.

After an interview with the Prime Minister on the 12th of July, I sent a telegram on the 24th to the Duke of Argyll, who was then Secretary of State for India, in the following words:—

“Ameer of Cabul alarmed at Russian progress; dissatisfied with general assurances and anxious to know definitely how far he may rely on our help if invaded. I propose to assure him if he unreservedly accepts and acts on our advice in all external relations we will help him with money, arms, and troops, if necessary, to repel unprovoked invasion. We to be the judge of the necessity.”

The Duke of Argyll answered on the 26th that

The Cabinet think you should inform Ameer that we do not at all

share his alarm, and consider there is no cause for it, but you may assure him we shall maintain our settled policy in favour of Afghanistan, if he abides by our advice in external affairs."*

I have given these telegrams in full, because Lord Cranbrook appears to have supposed that the answer I received was a refusal to sanction my proposal, that the assurances I wished to give were not given, and that the Ameer was simply told that the discussion of the subject was postponed. This is not the fact. On the contrary, I considered that the answer I received authorised me to give to the Prime Minister the assurances which I wished to give. I actually gave him those assurances on the 30th of July, in the following terms, which are almost identical with the words of my telegram to the Duke of Argyll of the 24th :—

"The British Government did not share the Ameer's apprehensions (of attack by Russia); but, as already mentioned in the previous conversation, it would be the duty of the Ameer, in case of any actual or threatened aggression, to refer the question to the British Government, who would endeavour by negotiation, and by every means in their power, to settle the matter and avert hostilities. It was not intended, by insisting on such previous reference to the British Government, to restrict or interfere with the power of the Ameer, as an independent ruler, to take such steps as might be necessary to repel any aggression on his territories; but such reference was a preliminary and essential condition of the British Government assisting him. In such event, should these endeavours of the British Government to bring about an amicable settlement prove fruitless, the British Government are prepared to assure the Ameer that they will afford him assistance in the shape of arms and money, and will also in case of necessity aid him with troops. The British Government holds itself perfectly free to decide as to the occasion when such assistance should be rendered, and also as to its nature and extent; moreover, the assistance will be conditional upon the Ameer himself abstaining from aggression, and on his unreserved acceptance of the advice of the British Government in regard to his external relations."†

But Shere Ali wanted much more than this. The Prime Minister explained that he wished for an unconditional guarantee of protection, and to receive an assurance that he would be supplied with whatever money, arms, or troops he

* Afghanistan Papers, p. 103.

† Afghanistan Papers, p. 114.

might ask for from the British Government in the event of attack. He also wished for large grants of money and arms to put his fortresses in order, and to equip his army. For all this no return whatever was to be asked by the British Government from Afghanistan.

Such requests were, of course, quite unreasonable, and I could not entertain them.

I addressed a letter to the Ameer on the 6th of September, at the close of the negotiations, and after giving some explanations of the correspondence with Russia about the Afghan boundary, I continued as follows:—

“The result of the communications between the British and the Russian Governments has been, in my opinion, materially to strengthen the position of Afghanistan and to remove apprehension of dangers from without. . . . To this settlement the British Government are a party, and they are consequently even more interested than before in the maintenance of the integrity of your Highness’s frontier. I have had some conversation with your Envoy on the subject of the policy which the British Government would pursue in the event of an attack upon your Highness’s territories. A copy of the record of these conversations is attached to this letter. But the question is, in my opinion, one of such importance that the discussion of it should be postponed to a more suitable opportunity.

“I do not entertain any apprehensions of danger to your Highness’s territories from without, and I therefore do not consider that it is necessary that your Highness should at present incur any large expenditure with a view to such a contingency. My hope is that, having received the foregoing assurances, your Highness will now be enabled to devote your undisturbed attention to the consolidation and improvement of your internal Government. The British Government desires to see your Highness’s country powerful and independent. It is my determination to maintain the policy which has been adopted towards your Highness by my predecessors, Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo, and I repeat to your Highness the assurance given you at the Umballa Durbar, that the British Government will endeavour, from time to time, by such means as circumstances may require, to strengthen the Government of your Highness, to enable you to exercise with equity and with justice your rightful rule, and to transmit to your descendants all the dignities and honours of which you are the lawful possessor.”*

The “record of conversations” to which I referred in my

* Afghanistan Papers, p. 116.

letter to the Ameer, and which contained the assurances of protection which I have quoted, were formal documents, which had been translated and officially communicated at the time to the Ameer's Prime Minister, and by which the British Government were, in my opinion, bound.

I had received no instructions from Her Majesty's Government to postpone the discussion of the question, and my reasons for writing in that sense to the Ameer were explained in the following extract from the despatch from the Government of India to the Secretary of State, of the 15th of September, 1873:—

“A copy and translation of these conversations” (containing the assurances of protection) “were annexed to the letter which the Viceroy has addressed to the Ameer. But as the subject is one of great importance, and the Envoy appeared to doubt how far his instructions justified him in committing himself to any definite arrangement, we considered it advisable to postpone the settlement of it to a more favourable opportunity, when we trust the matter may be discussed with the Ameer in person.”*

The result of the communications which passed in 1873 between Shere Ali's Prime Minister and myself was that an assurance of protection was given to Shere Ali, subject to conditions which I thought then, and still think, to be reasonable and necessary; but that, as Lord Mayo had done in 1869, I declined to comply with his wish for an unconditional guarantee of protection.

The negotiations of 1873 were approved by the Duke of Argyll, to whom they were reported in September of that year, and I have never had any reason to suppose that they were disapproved by Mr. Disraeli's Government, which succeeded to office a few months afterwards. In a debate upon the question, which was raised in the House of Lords by Lord Napier and Ettrick, in June, 1874, Lord Derby, representing the Government, expressed his opinion strongly against granting an unconditional guarantee of protection to Shere Ali. During the two succeeding years, when I was Viceroy under the Administration of Mr. Disraeli, no suggestion was made by the Secretary of State to the

* Afghanistan Papers, p. 109.

Government of India that the unconditional guarantee for which Shere Ali asked in 1873 ought to be given to him.

On the contrary, in January, 1875,* Lord Salisbury, who was then Secretary of State for India, urged the Government of India to press Shere Ali to agree to the establishment of a British agency at Herat, a demand which his Prime Minister had told the Foreign Secretary in 1873 would give rise to mistrust and misapprehension.† In reply we expressed our opinion, after consulting all the officers of the Government of India, both European and Native, whom we believed to be able to form a correct judgment of the sentiments of the Ameer, that he would be found most unwilling to receive a British Agent at Herat, but that we did not think that his objection would imply that his intentions had ceased to be loyal towards the British Government; and we pointed out that Lord Mayo had distinctly intimated to the Ameer in 1869, that no European officers would be placed as Residents in his cities.‡ We summed up our opinion in the following words:—

“It is in our opinion essential that the proposed arrangements should have the cordial consent of the Ameer. For the reasons given above, we are of opinion that, if we were to press the question on the Ameer at present, our proposals would in all probability either be refused or accepted with great reluctance.

“If the Ameer should give an unwilling consent, the officers whom we have consulted are agreed that no advantage would be derived from the presence of a British Agent at Herat

“If the Ameer should refuse, his refusal would impair the influence of the Government of India in Afghanistan. It must either be accepted without any change being made in our present policy towards Afghanistan, in which case the Ameer would be encouraged to act upon other occasions without regard to the wishes of the British Government; or we must treat it as a proof of unfriendly feeling on his part, modify our present policy, retire from our attitude of sympathy, and withdraw our assurances of support. If we are correct in believing that the refusal would not shew the intentions of the Ameer to be disloyal, it would afford no sufficient justification for a change of policy which might throw Afghanistan into the arms of Russia upon the first favourable opportunity.”§

* Afghanistan Papers, p. 128.

† Afghanistan Papers, p. 94.

‡ Afghanistan Papers, p. 163.

§ Afghanistan Papers, p. 133.

Notwithstanding this expression of opinion on the part of the Government of India, Lord Salisbury, in November, 1875,* instructed us to enter into negotiations with Shere Ali for the establishment of a British agency in Afghanistan. Neither then nor in the previous despatch had Lord Salisbury authorised us to offer to Shere Ali any more unqualified guarantee of protection than was given to him in 1873, or, indeed, any new concession whatever. We were, therefore, obliged to ask for further instructions from Her Majesty's Government. We thought that Shere Ali would certainly, if he entertained the proposal at all, raise the question of an unconditional guarantee of protection, and we said to Lord Salisbury in our despatch of the 28th of January, 1876:—†

“Your Lordship will doubtless have read the observations made by the Ameer in May, 1873, and the communications which took place with Syud Noor Mahomed later in the same year on the subject of the protection of Afghanistan. It then appeared that nothing short of a full and unconditional promise of protection against foreign attack would have been satisfactory to the Ameer; consequently in the Viceroy's letter to His Highness of the 6th of September, 1873, the question was deliberately reserved for future consideration. We had no authority then, nor have we received authority since, from Her Majesty's Government to give to the Ameer any such unconditional guarantee, and we are of opinion that there are grave objections against binding the British Government by any such obligation. We are precluded by law‡ from entering into a treaty of this nature without the express command of Her Majesty's Government, and unless such a treaty is accompanied by reciprocal engagements on the part of the Ameer, which seems to us to be inapplicable to the present condition of affairs.”

We also felt it to be our duty to endeavour to induce Her Majesty's Government to reconsider the conclusions at which they had arrived; and we ended our despatch in the following words:—

“We already see the fruits of the conciliatory policy which has been pursued since 1869, in the consolidation of the Ameer's power and the establishment of a strong government on our frontier. The Ameer's not unnatural dread of our interference in his internal affairs and the difficulties of his position, as described in our despatch of the 7th of June last, combined, perhaps, with the conviction that if ever a struggle

* Afghanistan Papers, p. 147.

† Afghanistan Papers, p. 149.

‡ 33 George III., c. 52.

for the independence of Afghanistan should come, we must in our own interest help him, may have induced him to assume a colder attitude towards us than we should desire. But we have no reason to believe that he has any desire to prefer the friendship of other Powers. We are convinced that a patient adherence to the policy adopted towards Afghanistan by Lord Canning, Lord Lawrence, and Lord Mayo, which it has been our earnest endeavour to maintain, presents the greatest promise of the eventual establishment of our relations with the Ameer on a satisfactory footing; and we deprecate, as involving serious danger to the peace of Afghanistan and to the interests of the British Empire in India, the execution, under present circumstances, of the instructions conveyed in your Lordship's despatch."

I have alluded to this correspondence, not only to show that down to April, 1876, when I ceased to be Viceroy, the Government of India had received no indication that Her Majesty's Government were of opinion that the assurances of protection given to Shere Ali in 1873 were insufficient; but because the reference to this correspondence in Lord Cranbrook's despatch* altogether fails adequately

*Paragraph 11, Afghanistan Papers, p. 263 :—

"In view of these interests, and of the responsibilities which had morally devolved upon the British Government on behalf of Afghanistan, looking also to the imperfect information available in regard to the country, in respect to which those responsibilities had been incurred, Lord Northbrook's Government had, in 1873, expressed the opinion that the temporary presence in Afghanistan of a British officer, as then proposed by them, might do much to allay any feelings of mistrust lingering in the minds of the Afghan people, and might at the same time prepare the way for eventually placing permanent British representatives at Cabul, Herat, and elsewhere. Encouraged by this opinion, Her Majesty's Government came to the conclusion that, although Lord Northbrook's efforts to attain the desired object had not met with success, the time had come when the measure thus indicated could no longer with safety be postponed. Your predecessor in Council had, indeed, whilst appreciating all the advantages to be anticipated from it, frankly represented to Her Majesty's present advisers the difficulties attending the initiation of it; he believed the time and circumstances of the moment to be inopportune for placing British Agents on the Afghan borders, and was of opinion that such a step should be deferred till the progress of events justified more specific assurances to Shere Ali, which might then be given in the shape of a treaty, followed by the establishment of agencies at Herat and other suitable places. Her Majesty's Government, however, were unable to agree in this view."

to express the serious representations which, upon two occasions, we felt it to be our duty to address to Her Majesty's Government as to the results which, in our opinion, would follow from an endeavour to press Shere Ali to receive British Residents in Afghanistan.

In the proceedings of the Government of India when I was Viceroy to which I have referred, there was an unanimous concurrence of opinion on the part of the Members of my Council.

Lord Cranbrook states in his despatch* that Lord Lytton was instructed in 1876, "to offer to Shere Ali that same active countenance and protection which he had previously solicited at the hands of the Indian Government." But he adds that "it was clearly impossible to enter into any formal engagement in this sense without requiring from the Ameer some substantial proof of his unity of interests with the British Government." The offensive and defensive treaty, therefore, which Lord Lytton was instructed to offer did not contain the unconditional guarantee of protection for which Shere Ali asked in 1873 from the Government of India. "It was clearly impossible," to use Lord Cranbrook's words, to give him such a guarantee.

It appears from the papers which have now been published that the *sine qua non* of the treaty which was offered Shere Ali by Lord Lytton, under the instructions conveyed in Lord Salisbury's despatch of the 28th of February, 1876, was that Shere Ali should agree to the permanent location of British officers in Afghanistan; and the heads of a treaty which the British Native Agent at Cabul was instructed to explain to Shere Ali in October, 1876,† limited the guarantee of protection which was offered to him very much as I had limited it in 1873, besides imposing upon him other conditions.

I think I have shewn that the inferences which have been generally drawn from Lord Cranbrook's despatch,—

* Paragraph 12, Afghanistan Papers, p. 263.

† Afghanistan Papers, p. 184. Consult also Draft of Treaty to be negotiated by Sir Lewis Pelly, and "Aide Mémoire for Subsidiary Secret and Explanatory Agreement," pp. 189-191.

namely, that when I was Viceroy in 1873, I wished to comply with Shere Ali's request for assurances of protection, but I was over-ruled by the Home Government, and that there was a change of policy with regard to complying with the request he made in 1873, after Mr. Disraeli succeeded Mr. Gladstone as Prime Minister, are not in accordance with the facts of the case.

I have confined myself exclusively in this memorandum to the correction of some of the incorrect inferences which have been generally drawn from Lord Cranbrook's despatch of the 18th of November. I disapprove of the proceedings of Her Majesty's Government which have resulted in war between Great Britain and Afghanistan; but I shall reserve the expression of my reasons for arriving at that conclusion until the meeting of Parliament. I have thought it might not be without advantage, however, to the discussions which will then take place, that I should put upon record my testimony upon matters of fact as to which no one can be so well able to speak as I am.

NORTHBROOK.

November 29th, 1878.

SPEECH OF THE EARL OF NORTHBROOK,

In the House of Lords, on December 5th, 1878.

THE EARL OF NORTHBROOK: My Lords, I rise to address your Lordships on this occasion because it appears to me that I am called upon to give evidence on two points, on both of which I am obliged to give it against Her Majesty's Government. The noble Viscount opposite (Viscount Cranbrook), in answering the speech of my noble friend behind me, (Earl Granville) gave, as far as I could follow him, a very able account of my actions and of the motives that actuated me in dealing with the Ameer of Cabul when I was Viceroy of India. It appears to me, however, with all due deference to the noble Viscount, that I am the only person who can state to your Lordships and to the country exactly what I did when I was Governor-General of India.

The question at issue between us is a very simple one. I have never made any charge against the noble Viscount of having endeavoured wilfully to misrepresent my conduct in this matter; but I am bound to say that the words used by the noble Viscount in his despatch of the 18th of November last give the people of this country an entirely inaccurate impression of what really happened at the time. That inaccurate impression has not only been expressed in the daily organs of the Press, but it has also been expressed to-night by the noble Lord the seconder of the Address. In Paragraphs 8 and 9 of the noble Viscount's despatch, he says that—

“Shere Ali, actuated by his fears on this score, sent a special Envoy to Simla in the summer of that year (1873) charged with the duty of expressing them to the Government of India.”

And in Paragraph 9, he says—

“Finding that the object of the Ameer was to ascertain definitely how far he might rely on the help of the British Government if his territories were threatened by Russia, Lord Northbrook's Government was prepared to assure him that under certain conditions the Govern-

ment of India would assist him to repel unprovoked aggression. But Her Majesty's Government at home did not share His Highness's apprehensions, and the Viceroy ultimately informed the Ameer that the discussion of the question would be best postponed to a more convenient season."

No person who reads those paragraphs could come to any other conclusion than that I wished to give certain assurances to the Ameer which I was prevented from giving by the Home Government, and that I was therefore compelled to tell the Ameer that the discussion of the matter had better be postponed to a future time; and from another paragraph of the noble Viscount's despatch it has been naturally inferred that Her Majesty's present Government gave in 1876 assurances to the Ameer which Her Majesty's late Government in 1873 had refused to give him.

As regards the first part of the question, I am, as I said before, the only person who can give evidence with respect to it. The fact is, that having asked to be allowed to give to the Ameer certain assurances, and having received a reply by telegraph from the Home Government in answer to my inquiry, I felt that their telegram justified me in giving the Ameer the precise assurances I desired to give him, and which I actually did give him through his Prime Minister, an authenticated copy of those assurances being forwarded to him personally. So far, therefore, from the despatch of the noble Viscount giving an accurate impression of what occurred, it gives an impression totally at variance with the facts of the case. As the noble Viscount has gone into this question at such length, and as the Duke of Argyll is unable to be in his place to-night to explain his own conduct, I asked him to allow me to make use of any private letters relating to this subject which might have passed between us; and, with his permission, I will read to the House a paragraph from a private letter I wrote to him two days after I received his telegram permitting me to give the assurance I desired to give to the Ameer, and before I had the interview with his Prime Minister. The words I used in the letter I wrote to the Duke of Argyll were these—"Your telegram of the 26th will enable me to give him sufficiently distinct assurances." This letter, therefore, entirely bears out my impression of what occurred at that time.

While I entirely acquit the noble Viscount of any deliberate intention to misrepresent the matter, I cannot help thinking that it is extremely unfortunate that he did not take more pains to master the facts of the case. If he had taken common pains to do so, he would never have allowed the paragraphs in his despatch to which I have referred to stand. The noble Viscount would have found my view of the case supported by the despatch of the noble Marquis opposite (the Marquis of Salisbury), of the 28th of February, 1876, who, in page 158 of the Papers, in referring to this question, says :—

“In the year 1873, Lord Northbrook gave to the Envoy of the Ameer the personal assurance that in the event of any aggression upon the territories of His Highness, which the British Government had failed to avert by negotiation, that Government would be prepared “to assure the Ameer that they will afford him assistance in the shape of arms and money, and will also, in cases of necessity, assist him with troops.”

VISCOUNT CRANBROOK: Go on. Read the next paragraph.

The EARL OF NORTHBROOK: I will do so if the noble Viscount wishes me to do so. The despatch goes on :—

“The terms of this declaration, however, although sufficient to justify reproaches on the part of Shere Ali, if in the contingency to which it referred he should be left unsupported by the British Government, were, unfortunately, too ambiguous to secure confidence or to inspire gratitude on the part of His Highness. The Ameer, in fact, appears to have remained under a resentful impression that his Envoy had been trifled with, and his attitude towards the Government of India has ever since been characterised by ambiguity and reserve.”

That is an argument to which I will advert immediately. At present I am dealing merely with the facts of the case, and I think that if the noble Viscount had consulted the Papers carefully he never would have introduced these paragraphs into his despatch. If any one will read the 12th paragraph of Lord Lytton's despatch of the 10th of May, 1877, at page 162 of the Papers, it will be seen that the account of the noble Viscount does not state the case accurately. There is also the statement in the conferences between the Prime Minister of the Ameer and Sir Lewis Pelly, which gives a completely accurate account of the transactions of 1873. The Prime Minister says that the assurances at his first

interview were not sufficient, but that afterwards further assurances were given; and if the noble Viscount desires any further evidence, there is the language of Lord Lytton in his letter of the 15th of March, 1877, to the Prime Minister, in which the assurances I had given in 1873 were withdrawn; all notice of which has been omitted by the noble Viscount. Therefore, I say that even from the Papers themselves the noble Viscount ought to have formed a more accurate judgment of the transaction, and have avoided writing a paragraph which has led to such misapprehension on the part of the public.

But that is not all. The noble Viscount has now upon his Council three distinguished Indian statesmen who were Members of my Council in 1873, or afterwards—Sir Henry Norman, Sir Barrow Ellis, and Sir William Muir—all of whom were cognizant of these transactions; and yet will it be believed that the noble Viscount has not taken the common precaution of asking them whether he was right in his facts before publishing those paragraphs, and that the first thing that they knew about his despatch was seeing it in the newspapers? If he had taken that precaution, the noble Viscount would not have found himself in the difficult position in which he is now placed.

Exception has been taken by the noble Earl behind me (Earl Granville) to the 16th paragraph of the despatch of the noble Viscount of the 18th of November, which refers to the close of Sir Lewis Pelly's negotiations, and I cannot look upon the explanation of the noble Viscount with respect to the accuracy of that paragraph as satisfactory. In the 18th paragraph, moreover, the noble Viscount describes the position of the Government after the close of the negotiations as one of "vigilant reserve." The real position was that on the 15th of March, 1877, the Viceroy had informed the Ameer that all the assurances of protection he had received from Lord Lawrence, Lord Mayo, and myself, were repudiated, and that the only engagement by which the British Government were bound was the Treaty of 1855, under which no assurance of protection was given him. I do not think anyone would draw any such inference as this from the account given in the despatch of these transactions. Giving the noble

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Viscount every credit for a desire not to misrepresent the facts of the case in his despatch, I must say that anyone who reads his conclusions, and then carefully examines the Papers will be very much surprised.

There is another point in the noble Viscount's speech to which I must allude, although it is one on which I have no personal knowledge. The noble Viscount in his despatch leaves it to be inferred that Her Majesty's present Government have given to the Ameer, or rather offered to the Ameer, the assurances which His Highness required from me, and which I was not able to give him. The noble Viscount spoke in a condemnatory sense of the safeguards and cautions attached to the assurances offered to Shere Ali in 1873.

VISCOUNT CRANBROOK: I must deny having expressed the sentiment which the noble Earl imputes to me.

The EARL OF NORTHBROOK: Then I wish the noble Viscount would not use language which is liable to misconstruction. His words about "vague" assurances certainly seemed to imply that those assurances were not of a kind which ought to have been given at the time. Now, I wish to point out to your Lordships that the offers made to the Ameer by Her Majesty's present Government were guarded far more strictly than those of 1873. These papers contain the draft treaty which Sir Lewis Pelly was authorised to conclude with the Ameer. My assurances to the Ameer in 1873 were that the British Government, under certain circumstances, would afford him assistance in the shape of arms and money, and also, in case of necessity, assist him with troops. The safeguards were these—that he should abstain from aggression and should unreservedly accept the advice of the British Government in regard to his external relations. Now, turning to the draft treaty which Sir Lewis Pelly was authorised to conclude with the Ameer, which is given at page 190 of the Papers, what do I find? There is an assurance of protection, no doubt, in the second Article, but it is qualified in the third and fourth Articles in precisely the same way as the assurance of protection given to the Ameer in 1873. The qualification is that His Highness should "refrain from all provocation of, aggression on, or interference with, the States and territories

beyond his present frontier," and that "he should conduct his relations with foreign States in harmony with the policy of the British Government." It appears that the Viceroy was not quite satisfied with these conditions, and on looking to the "*aide mémoire* for subsidiary secret and explanatory agreement," at page 191, you will find that it was understood, in regard to Article 2, that the Ameer should "bind himself to abstain from discussion of political, international, or State matters with any foreign Government," communicating unreservedly to the British Government all communications on such subjects received by him. I wish to show that if there is any distinction between the terms offered to the Ameer by the Viceroy under instructions from the Home Government, and the terms which were proposed in 1873, the terms proposed by Her Majesty's present Government were more strict than those of 1873.

I have thought it right to mention this, because there is great misapprehension on the subject. It has been said in several of the newspapers, and notably by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, that the conduct of the late Government towards Shere Ali was the whole cause of the present war. Shere Ali, said the *Pall Mall Gazette*, wanted to throw himself into the arms of England, and made a proposal which Lord Northbrook was willing to accept, but which Mr. Gladstone's Government declined; and out of that proposal has grown the Afghan war. Knowing the truth of this matter, as I do, I cannot, in common fairness and justice to the Government under which I was then serving, refrain from explaining what the real facts of the case are, and I venture to say I should have taken the same course if these circumstances had occurred when the party opposite was in office, and while I was serving under the Earl of Beaconsfield.

I think the noble Marquis (the Marquis of Salisbury) has very much underrated the importance of the observations of the noble Earl beside me (Earl Granville) upon the debate which occurred in this House on the 15th of June last year. I do not think anything which amounts to concealing from your Lordships facts which are known by Ministers can be considered to be a "small personal question unworthy of discussion." It so happened that I took a very great

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interest in the debate in question, and the account which the noble Marquis has given of it is not one which I feel disposed to accept. My noble friend (the Duke of Argyll) certainly did put some questions on particular points to the noble Marquis, but he did not confine his speech to that. If he had done so, I might have accepted the explanation now given by the noble Marquis. My noble friend discussed the policy pursued by successive Viceroy's towards Afghanistan, remarking that the views of the last three Viceroy's were that we should maintain an amicable and watchful attitude towards the Ameer, without entangling ourselves in permanent engagements. There can be only one interpretation of what occurred. The Duke of Argyll wished to receive, not only an answer to a particular question, but a general assurance from the noble Marquis that he had not departed from the line of policy indicated. I remember hearing the noble Marquis state that affairs maintained a peaceful aspect, and that there was "no reason for any apprehension of any change of policy or disturbance in our Indian Empire." But the noble Marquis, in now quoting that passage, omitted to quote the words "in our Indian Empire."

I assert on my own authority, having been personally in the House and having listened with the greatest care to what fell from the noble Marquis, that I believed and accepted those words to mean that there had been no material change in our relations with Afghanistan. That is not all, because I addressed your Lordships, and I gave the noble Marquis an opportunity, of which he might have taken advantage, of explaining the misconception under which I laboured, and of stating to your Lordships precisely the state of affairs as they existed at that time. As the matter is important, I must trouble your Lordships with the few words I used on that occasion. I said:—

"The policy we have pursued with regard to the Ameer has been to show him that we desired to assist him with our advice whenever he required it, and not to press upon him the presence of British officers in his territories, unless he really desires that they should go there, and will give them a welcome."

I said:—

“ That if that policy is deliberately adhered to now, as it has been for many years, whatever suspicions may be entertained by the Ameer will disappear ; he will see that they have no foundation ; he will look upon us as his best friends, to whom in certain circumstances he will have to apply for assistance.”

I added :—

“ It is with great satisfaction I hear that the policy I have referred to Her Majesty’s Government will continue to pursue.”—[3 *Hansard*, ccxxxiv. 1843.]

I therefore stated in the presence of your Lordships the interpretation I put on the words of the noble Marquis ; and I further said :—

“ I am satisfied he has given us that assurance in perfect good faith, and that we may trust him not to resist any attempt to put it aside.”

If it had not been for that assurance, as I understood it, most undoubtedly I should have brought the question before your Lordships. I will not say what the effect of the debate might have been, but, at any rate, before the war had been entered into, this House and the country would have known what the policy of the Government was, and would have been able to express an opinion as to whether that policy was right or wrong, and whether we were to drift into the war in which we are now engaged.

As I have said before, this is not simply a personal question. In dealing with distant countries great confidence must be placed in Her Majesty’s Government, and great discretion must be used by those who differ from them. On such questions a Minister is required to be more careful than in dealing even with European questions. I have said what the assurances given were, and I have now to state what were the circumstances at the time they were given. So far from Her Majesty’s Government not having desired to enter into any definitive treaty engagement, an endeavour had been made to negotiate a treaty with the Ameer ; and so far from there having been no change in our relations with the Ameer, on the 15th of March, 1877, the assurances that had been given to the Ameer—of protection in the event of attack or of internal disturbance—by Lord Lawrence, Lord Mayo, and myself, had been withdrawn under the instructions of the British Government, any expectation of support from

us had been repudiated, and he had been told that we were under no engagement except that of the Treaty of 1855, under which there was no obligation on our part except to refrain from interference, and to leave the Ameer entirely to himself. I was perfectly astounded by the condition of things revealed by the despatch addressed to the noble Marquis by the Viceroy on the 10th of May, 1877, which must have been in the hands of the noble Marquis at the time he gave the assurances in the House of Lords in June, 1877, of which I have spoken. It is with deep regret I am obliged to say this; it would not be right, the question having been put, and the answer having been given, if I did not give my deliberate testimony that the statement then made by the noble Marquis gave me a completely incorrect impression of what the real facts of the case were.

I am not going now to enter into the general policy of the war; but I must say that I do not think the noble Duke behind me (the Duke of Somerset) was quite fair in his remarks about the noble Lord, a late Governor-General (Lord Lawrence), for having joined the Afghan Committee. If my noble friend had done such a thing in the sense of supporting the Afghans against the British Government, no language would be too strong to be used in the circumstances. But as matters stand, I am surprised at the noble Duke's condemnation of my noble friend. He has an opinion that the war is right. Very good; but my noble friend thinks it is unjust and impolitic—an opinion in which I myself am very much disposed to concur with him. The noble Duke says that my noble friend is not patriotic; but he would appear not to be patriotic simply because he differs from the noble Duke, and expresses the earnest opinions which he holds. Few men in this country have given such proofs as my noble friend has given of patriotism, of vigour, of honour, and of a desire at any risk to maintain the British Empire in India; and yet, because he does not happen to agree with the noble Duke, he is to be spoken of in such terms. It is repugnant to all my feelings of justice and to every sentiment of propriety that a man of such distinguished services should be so spoken of in this House. My noble friend has a perfect right to express his opinions on the causes of this war, and to say whether he

thinks it just or unjust. It is fortunate that we have men like him in the country, who know something of our former relations with Afghanistan, and who can correct statements which have been made and despatches which have been published by the knowledge which they possess.

One thing more. With regard to the Amendment proposed by the noble Earl (Earl Grey) I hope it will not be pressed to a division. Unfortunately, this discussion has assumed a somewhat personal character. Nobody more regrets that circumstance than I do; but from that very fact, if the Amendment were to be pressed, your Lordships would be asked to vote upon a proposition which you have not yet had an opportunity of fully and completely discussing. At the same time, I must confess that I concur entirely with that part of the argument of the noble Earl which rests upon the Act of 1858. I hold that it is not right for any Administration carrying on war outside India to apply the revenues of that country towards the expense of such war without the previous consent of Parliament. In this case there was plenty of time before the declaration of war for the Government to have summoned Parliament and explained their policy; therefore, that would have been a proper and a Constitutional course, because there can be no doubt that the Prerogative of the Crown is limited by Act of Parliament, and, although it is the Prerogative of the Crown to declare war, at the same time the clauses of the Act of 1858 proscribe the course that should be followed under the circumstances.

It has been a matter of extreme regret to me to be placed to some extent in collision with the noble Marquis and the noble Viscount opposite. I have endeavoured since I returned from India to abstain from making unnecessarily any observations on Indian affairs. I can say with perfect sincerity that, both in and out of Parliament, I have endeavoured to look at Indian affairs entirely apart from party politics; and I should not hesitate for a moment to express my opinion as strongly with regard to anything done by those on my own side of the House as with regard to the conduct of noble lords opposite.

SPEECH OF THE EARL OF NORTHBROOK,

In the House of Lords, on December 10th, 1878.

MY LORDS,—In addressing some remarks to your Lordships this evening, I wish to commence by expressing the gratification which I have felt at the gallantry which has been shown by Her Majesty's forces in the field in Afghanistan. I wish also to express my confidence in the officers in command of those forces, Sir Samuel Browne and General Roberts, who have conducted successful operations in the field, and General Stewart and General Biddulph, who have had no such opportunity yet, but who I am sure will justify their reputation whenever they have that opportunity. Having been personally acquainted with those officers, I believe that better selections could not have been made. The spirit which Her Majesty's British and Native forces have evinced cannot be surpassed; and I may be permitted to say that the general efficiency of the army is, in my opinion, mainly due to the administration of my noble and gallant friend, Lord Napier of Magdala, who was for many years Commander-in-Chief in India, and of my gallant friend, Major-General Sir Henry Norman, who for a long period was Secretary to the Government of India in the Military Department, and afterwards the Military Member of the Council of the Viceroy. The general arrangements for the campaign, so far as we know them, reflect great credit upon the Commander-in-Chief in India, Sir Frederick Haines, who will, I am sure, satisfactorily discharge his responsible duties; and particularly upon the Quartermaster-General's Department of the Indian army. I must further express my satisfaction, but not surprise, at the expressions of loyalty received by the Viceroy from Native Princes of India, some of them my personal friends. The

Maharaja of Gwalior and others have offered their personal services and those of their troops. Having so recently filled the office of Viceroy in India, I cannot pass these offers by without expressing my gratification.

I will now say a few words on the main question raised by the Address to the Crown. Your Lordships are asked to assent to the application of the revenues of India to defray the expenses of the war in Afghanistan. My Lords, I entirely agree with my noble friend who recently filled the office of Governor of the Presidency of Madras (Lord Napier and Ettrick) in regretting the course which Her Majesty's Government have taken. It would have been right, just, and generous to have decided at once that no portion of the expense should fall upon the revenues of India. I consider the war to be the direct consequence of the state of affairs in Europe, and not to have arisen from anything immediately connected with our Indian Empire. For that reason, if for no other, India should not be called upon to bear the cost. Moreover, India has suffered recently from two severe famines; the people are impoverished; and the state of the finances is far from satisfactory. True, the noble Viscount opposite (Viscount Cranbrook) told us that the Government of India expects a surplus of a million and a quarter this year above the estimates; but this is exactly what I anticipated in the discussion of last year. The reason of this surplus is that extra taxation has been unnecessarily imposed upon the people of India for the purpose of raising what is called a Famine Fund. The new taxes, which press upon the poorer classes, and which I believe to be unpopular and impolitic, ought to be taken off as soon as the condition of the finances will allow of it.

I entirely agree with what has fallen from the noble Earl on the woolsack, that it would be a subject for regret if Indian questions came to be regarded as party questions. I have never considered them to be so; and it was rather a gratification to me to hear the complaint of the noble Duke (the Duke of Somerset) that there had been no great meeting of the Liberal party called together upon this question. As regards the speech

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of the noble Viscount who introduced this subject (Viscount Cranbrook) I have nothing personal to complain of. He is correct in saying that there has been no reticence on the part of the Government in producing papers, and he has a perfect right to criticise my public conduct. I am the last person to complain of any such criticisms. What I am now about to say is the result of my actual experience in India. The noble and learned Earl on the woolsack has given an account of the objects of the British Government during the last ten years in dealing with Central Asia and Afghanistan. During that period there have been two Administrations—five years under Mr. Gladstone and five years under the noble Earl opposite. I was Viceroy in India during two years under Mr. Gladstone's Administration and two years under that of the noble Earl, and as far as I know, and so far as my dealings with these affairs enable me to form an opinion, I have not been able to find out any difference whatever, during that period, in the objects which the British Government desired to secure with regard to the progress of Russia in Central Asia or to our dealings with Afghanistan; bearing in mind, of course, that the general line of policy must be modified by the progress of events.

Having filled the high office of Viceroy in India, I think it is absolutely necessary, to avoid any misconception in discussing the policy of the British Government towards Russia in regard to Central Asia, for me to say that the Government of India, while I had any connection with it, was not actuated by the fear of any attack upon India by Russia. We never believed that such an attack was possible, and we were of opinion that if anything of the kind were possible the strength of the British Empire in India and in this country was amply sufficient to render such an attack futile, and disastrous only to those who might make the attempt. The Governments of England and of India have never looked upon the progress of Russia in Central Asia with the eyes of that school of which Sir Henry Rawlinson, who has been quoted by the noble and learned Earl on the woolsack, is the most able exponent. In 1869 the Government of India said:—

"We by no means share in the exaggerated apprehensions expressed in many quarters as to the danger to British rule in India which may arise from an extension of Russian influence in those countries lying to the South and East of her enormous possessions in Asia.

"We believe that the influence of a civilised European power over wild and savage tribes cannot be otherwise than beneficial.

"We would therefore heartily assist in establishing a frank and clear understanding with Russia as to the relative position of British and Russian interests in Asia."

In accordance with these principles, they suggested that, as it was for the interests of both countries that a wide border of independent States should exist between the British and Russian frontiers, it would be desirable that Russia should be invited to adopt the same policy with regard to the independent States which came under her legitimate influence, as the Government of India had pursued with regard to Afghanistan and the independent States within their influence.

Her Majesty's Government entered into negotiations with Russia with this object. The negotiations, commenced by Lord Clarendon and continued by Lord Granville, lasted for several years. Finally, Russia accepted in 1873 the boundary of Afghanistan suggested by the Government of India in the time of Lord Mayo, and it was arranged that Russia should, to the best of her ability, prevent the Native States on her side from creating any disturbance in Afghanistan; while we, on the other hand, engaged to exercise our influence to prevent the Ameer of Cabul from transgressing the boundaries of his dominions. These negotiations took place under the Administration of Mr. Gladstone. Again, under the Administration of the noble Earl opposite (the Earl of Beaconsfield) similar negotiations took place in 1875. The Government of India entirely concurred with the views expressed by the Home Government in those negotiations; and one of the last despatches I sent home when I was Viceroy expressed the concurrence of the Government of India in the arrangements made by the noble Earl now sitting on the cross benches (the Earl of Derby). It is but fair to the

Russian Government to add that during the time that I was in India they loyally carried out the engagements into which they had entered.

The noble and learned Earl on the woolsack and the noble Viscount opposite (Viscount Cranbrook) have accused the late Government of timidity in their communications with Russia, and alluded to a paragraph in a despatch of the 30th of June, 1873, in which the Government of India, when I was Viceroy, suggested that Her Majesty's Government should make a plain declaration to the Russian Government that the British Government would defend Afghanistan in the event of unprovoked attack; and they have said that this was not done. The Government of India always urged upon Her Majesty's Government, perhaps in terms a little stronger than the Foreign Secretary of the day may have liked, the expediency of speaking in the plainest language to the Russian Government both of the independence of Afghanistan and of the inconvenience which might arise from the progress of Russia in the direction of India. I do not want to pit the policy of one Government of Her Majesty against another; but as that policy has been indiscriminately attacked by one member of the present Cabinet, I am afraid I cannot depend upon other members of the Cabinet to defend it. However, in the Central Asian Papers lately laid before Parliament there is a despatch written by the noble Earl on the cross benches (the Earl of Derby) to Lord Augustus Loftus in June, 1877, in which the noble Earl quotes a despatch from Lord Granville, dated January 7th, 1874, and says:—

“His Lordship thought it right to state candidly and at once to the Russian Government, that the independence of Afghanistan was regarded by Her Majesty's Government as a matter of great importance to the welfare and security of British India, and to the tranquillity of Asia.”

This declaration made by Lord Granville in 1874, was plain and distinct.

The Government of India in 1874 were much concerned about some probable movements of the Russians in the direction of Merve, not on account of any apprehension of

danger to British India, but because of the probability that such an advance would lead to difficulties between Russia and Afghanistan; and at the time when the late Government resigned that question was particularly prominent. The Government of India wrote pressing to the Home Government to speak frankly to Russia, to tell her of the inconvenience which might arise from that advance, and to do what was possible to prevent it. The noble Earl who was then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (the Earl of Derby) wrote in the strongest terms to the Russian Government, and said that the advance of the Russian arms in the direction of Merv would impose on Her Majesty's Government the necessity of making a corresponding advance in order to allay apprehensions and to remove misconception from the minds of the people of those countries. On reading those words and the words used by Lord Granville in 1874, I felt that the intention of the Government of India had been fully carried out by Her Majesty's Government. It seems to me, therefore, that the inference drawn by the noble and learned Earl on the woolsack and the noble Viscount opposite as to the conduct of Mr. Gladstone's Government, and of their own Government, is entirely unfounded. Both Governments, notwithstanding the objections of the noble and learned Earl, actually used much the same language to Russia as the Government of India, rightly as I believe, had suggested.

With respect to the opinions of Her Majesty's present Government on the position of Russia in Central Asia, it is hardly necessary to do more than to refer to the speech of the Prime Minister in the House of Commons in May, 1876, when he said that he was "not of that school who viewed the advances of Russia into Asia with those deep misgivings some do." He said that Asia was large enough for the destinies of both Russia and England. "At no time," he added, "has there been a better understanding between the Courts of St. James and St. Petersburg than at the present moment; and there is this good understanding because our policy is a clear and a frank policy." I think that those were wise words. They seem, from the papers laid before

Parliament, to have given great satisfaction in Russia, and they show that the policy of both Governments towards Russia was, up to that time, one and the same.

So much for our policy with regard to Russia. With regard to Afghanistan and other neighbouring States, the policy of the Indian Government was thus expressed by Lord Mayo, before he died, in a despatch of the 19th of January, 1872:—

“The cardinal points of the foreign policy which the Government of India should steadily pursue may be briefly described as follows:— We should establish with our frontier States of Khelat, Afghanistan, Nipal, and Burnah and possibly at some future day with Yarkund, intimate relations of friendship; we should make them feel that though we are all-powerful, we have no wish to encroach on their authority; but, on the contrary, that our earnest desire is to support their power and maintain their nationality; and that if severe necessity arise we might assist them with money, arms, and, perhaps, in certain eventualities, with men. We could thus create in these States outworks of our Empire, and assuring them that the days of annexation are passed, make them practically feel that they have everything to gain and nothing to lose by endeavouring to deserve our favour and support.”

The noble Viscount opposite (Viscount Cranbrook) seemed, the other night, to have some difficulty in describing what our “settled policy” towards Afghanistan was. If the noble Viscount had been longer in the India Office he would have found out that the policy was clear and decided. I do not want to add anything to the explanation I have read, and I have read it because the policy ought to stand clearly before your Lordships. When Lord Mayo was in India the first application that he had to make of that policy was in dealing with Afghanistan, in consequence of the arrangements made by his predecessor, Lord Lawrence, for the support of Shere Ali, and that a meeting should take place between him and the Viceroy. I am not going over again the history of the Umballa meeting. Although Lord Mayo, when he met Shere Ali, could not comply with all his wishes, the result of the conferences which then took place was by no means unsatisfactory. I wish to add my testimony to the testimony of those noble lords who have said

in this House that the personal influence and the generous confidence inspired by Lord Mayo were of substantial public advantage in dealing with the Native Princes of India, and almost, if not quite, disarmed the suspicions of one who was the most suspicious of a suspicious race.

My Lords, Shere Ali was not less suspicious when, in the year 1873, I had to enter into some negotiations with him. I will not trouble your Lordships with any long account of the Simla negotiations, they have been so much before the House. All that I shall say is that upon that occasion, having received authority from Her Majesty's Government, I gave Shere Ali assurances in respect to assistance from the British Government under certain circumstances very much in the terms I read just now when describing the general policy to be pursued towards States which adjoin British India. There were in the speeches of the noble Viscount (Viscount Cranbrook) and of the noble and learned Earl on the woolsack certain statements with regard to those negotiations which I cannot accept. Of course I know that the assurances which I gave to Shere Ali did not come up to the expectations he entertained. At the same time, when the noble Viscount brings forward the Prime Minister of Shere Ali, who conducted the negotiations in 1873, as evidence to show that the assurances which I then gave were vague, I cannot accept the extract read by the noble Viscount as conveying a correct account of the views of the Prime Minister. The noble Viscount read an extract from the conference between the Prime Minister and Sir Lewis Pelly, on the 8th of February, 1877, which will be found at page 204 of the Afghanistan Papers. It is true that the Prime Minister then said that the nature of the assistance to be given to Shere Ali was left obscure, both in my writings and sayings: but this remark applied only to my first interview with the Prime Minister, and if the noble Viscount had taken the trouble to read the report of the next conference, on the 10th of February, given in the very next page of the papers, he would have found that the Prime Minister proceeded to relate how he had afterwards discussed the subject completely with the Foreign Secretary, and how

at a subsequent interview with me "all the subjects were thoroughly discussed, and so nothing was left unconsidered." The Prime Minister, (who, I must say, gave a very accurate account of the transactions of 1873,) throughout the conferences with Sir Lewis Pelly in 1877, so far from complaining that the assurances given by me in 1873 were vague and undefined, was actually trying to meet the complaint put into his mouth by Sir Lewis Pelly that they were vague and inconclusive, and that therefore it was necessary to make a new treaty with the Ameer.

There were, no doubt, some causes which led the Ameer to be dissatisfied with the Government of India. In the first place, both he and the Persian Government were dissatisfied with the arbitration which the British Government had undertaken, and which was ably and impartially carried out by Sir Frederick Goldsmid, to settle the boundary of the two countries in Seistan. Then Shere Ali was offended at the advice I gave him to keep faith with his son Yakoob Khan. I need not defend my conduct in having done this for no noble lord has taken exception to it. The noble Viscount (Viscount Cranbrook) having been so short a time in office cannot be expected to know much about these details; but he entirely misapprehended the facts of the case when he charged me with having sent the message to the Ameer by a "common messenger." My Lords, I sent it by the ordinary channel of communication with the Ameer—the Native Agent of the British Government who was resident at his Court. That was, in fact, the only channel of communication I could have employed, and it was precisely the same channel which was used by Lord Lytton to conduct the late negotiations with the Ameer. The noble and learned Earl on the woolsack—and I cannot say that I am surprised at any error into which he may have fallen, for the subject is very complicated and difficult—has said that there was a great contrast between my letter and that written to Shere Ali in regard to his son Yakoob by General Kaufmann, the Russian Governor-General of Turkestan, in the year 1875.

The LORD CHANCELLOR : It was in the year before.

The EARL OF NORTHBROOK : I understood the noble and learned Earl to say 1875; but the letter was written by General Kaufmann before I went to India. In fact, it was written in 1871, when Lord Mayo was Viceroy, and related to different events. I feel that I need not dwell long upon the other ground of complaint which the Ameer had against the Government of India—namely, the sending a Native gentleman to carry a present to the Ruler of Wakhan, who had been civil to some British officers who had visited his neighbourhood. There was some misapprehension about this affair which I explained to the Ameer, but I insisted upon his permitting the messenger to proceed, as I thought his objections were unreasonable. The noble Viscount has commented upon this transaction as if I had been disposed to go to war with Afghanistan upon the matter; but your Lordships will readily understand that there were other ways of dealing with the Ameer if he had refused; and, in fact, he did what I wished.

As regards all these sources of complaint on the part of the Ameer, I apprehend that no noble lord would wish the Government of India to have done everything which the Ruler of Afghanistan wanted them to do. That would have been a course entirely undignified and quite improper. I hold that the Ameer had no reasonable ground of complaint, and I think I did what was right and reasonable towards him. Let us look, however, at the general result of this policy, which I have said was the policy of two Governments, in India and at home, during the whole time that I was Viceroy and also in the time of Lord Mayo. There was no difference whatever in the policy of the two Governments. Both wanted to give reasonable assurances of protection to the Ameer, and both desired to keep on good terms with him. The result was fairly satisfactory. We wished that the Ameer should keep peace with his neighbours, and that he should follow our advice in his foreign affairs. He wanted to make an attack on Bokhara, but he abstained from doing so upon our advice. He next quarrelled with the Persians about Seistan; nevertheless, in consequence of our advice, he accepted our arbitration, and

as far as I know he loyally kept his word. I advised him to give no assistance to the Turkomans; he acted upon my advice, and moreover, at my request, he tried to induce them to give up to the Russian Government some Russian subjects who had been captured and made slaves, in order to prevent a quarrel between Russia and the Turkomans which might have brought the Russians to Merve. Then, as to his domestic affairs, I am not aware, that the Ameer had any serious quarrel with me about them, with the exception, perhaps, of my advice to him about Yakoob Khan. He asked me in 1874 to do what I could with the Persian Government to induce them to give a civil answer to his letter announcing the nomination of Abdoola Jan as his heir. That did not look like the act of a man who was hostile to the British Government and wished to quarrel with it. The most important thing he did just before I left India was to bring entirely within his control the country bordering on the Turkoman frontier, not very far from the boundary which was laid down between England and Russia as that which was not to be transgressed. He communicated with us. We wrote home to the Government asking them to inform the Russian Government, and I believe the noble Earl on the cross benches (the Earl of Derby) communicated with Russia. All this shows that what was contemplated by the Governments of Mr. Gladstone and of the noble Earl opposite (the Earl of Beaconsfield), namely, to remain on good terms with the Ruler of Afghanistan and to keep him a reasonable and sensible being who should not quarrel with his neighbours, was maintained up to the time when I left India. I do not like to quote my own despatches, but the account I gave in them of the state of mind of the Ameer was very much like that which I have now given to your Lordships. I believe now—not on my own authority, but on that of everybody who knew anything about it—that the Ameer was then loyal, in the sense that he had not the slightest inclination to turn to Russia for support. On the other hand, he was a little “touchy” on certain things. On two occasions the Government of India wrote to the Secretary of State when I was Viceroy that if he would treat him with patience, and not

press upon him certain things unnecessarily which were distasteful to him, there was no doubt that he would remain our good friend. We felt that he was an Asiatic, and should be treated with patience as such by his European neighbours.

I know the noble Marquis opposite (Salisbury) entertains a different opinion from that which I hold, in common with everyone with whom I have conversed who has filled a responsible position in India, upon the disposition of Shere Ali. The noble Marquis, of course, has a perfect right to his own opinion, but he ought not to cast a slur upon a distinguished servant of the Government of India which is entirely undeserved. In a despatch of October 4th, 1877, the noble Marquis, referring to the state of mind of the Ameer when I left India in 1876, said :—

“ This (the course of events) demonstrates but too plainly how erroneous was the opinion expressed so recently as 1875 by Sir R. Pollock, the Commissioner of Peshawur, that ‘ no unfavourable change had occurred in the disposition of the Ameer.’ Shere Ali’s confidential Envoy stated explicitly that his master had ‘ now a deep-rooted mistrust of the good faith and sincerity of the British Government.’ ”

Sir R. Pollock tells me he is unable to correct this statement himself, because he has very properly felt it to be his duty, in consequence of the confidential position he so recently occupied at Peshawur, to consider his lips sealed, and to take no part directly or indirectly in the discussions that have taken place about the Afghan war. My Lords, the opinion given by Sir R. Pollock was quoted by the noble Marquis from the despatch of the Government of India of the 7th of June, 1875, and it was given, not in 1875, but in the beginning of 1874, and therefore before the incidents about Yakoob Khan and the despatch of a messenger to Wakhan had occurred. But, besides, your Lordships will see in a moment how unfair the statement of the noble Marquis is with respect to Sir R. Pollock. It is perfectly true that Shere Ali’s Prime Minister said to Dr. Bellew in a private conversation on the 28th of January, 1877, which will be found at page 195 of the Afghanistan Papers, that “ the Ameer had a deep-rooted mistrust of the British Government, and

that he had many reasons for that distrust," but it appears from that conversation that the main reason for that mistrust was the endeavour to force British officers upon him. No doubt the Prime Minister alluded to other matters, but this was, all through the conferences, the principal ground of his complaints; and therefore—I am sure perfectly unintentionally—the noble Marquis was in error in attributing any mistake to Sir Richard Pollock. I regret that the noble Marquis should have thrown any doubts upon Syud Noor Mahomed's character by saying that his statements were obviously insincere. It is true that his history is like a chapter from the "Arabian Nights." He travelled once with a string of horses from one end of India to the other, and eventually rose to be the trusted Minister of the Ameer, and served his master ably and loyally. A further statement was made by him, as will be seen by the papers, when he was lying ill. Dr. Bellew went to see him and the statement he then made was very pathetic. He said, "This is a very serious business. It is the last time the Ameer will treat with the British Government. You must not impose upon us a burden which we cannot bear, and if you overload us the responsibility rests with you." The doctor asked him what burden he referred to, and he replied, "The residence of British officers on the frontiers of Afghanistan." This, my Lords, is enough to show that the state of the Ameer's mind as represented by his Prime Minister arose mainly from the endeavour to force resident British officers upon him, directed by the noble Marquis himself in 1876, contrary to the opinion of Sir R. Pollock and to that of every officer who had a knowledge of Afghanistan.

I said that when I left India the Ameer was loyal to the British Government. Whether he was inclined to turn towards Russia is the main point. It was said by the noble Viscount (Viscount Cranbrook) that after the negotiations of 1873 the Ameer at once turned to Russia. What proof is there for that statement? I was surprised to hear the opinion of our Native Agent at Cabul quoted in support of it, and

at the manner in which the noble Viscount spoke of the reports of the Native Agent. The noble Viscount said it was easy to see that his reports were all rubbish. Our Native Agent was a Mohammedan gentleman of high character and standing, Nawab Atta Mahomed Khan, who did good service in the Mutiny, and received a handsome reward from Lord Lytton for his services at Cabul. Englishmen are not the only people who can do anything. Many Natives can and do render good service to the British Government. In October, 1876, our Native Agent went to Simla and said that the Ameer did not suspect us of conspiring with Russia to his prejudice, nor that the British coveted any portion of his territory; the Ameer was well aware, he said, that Russia sooner or later would attack Afghanistan. The Agents of Russia, he added, were regarded by the Ameer as a source of embarrassment. That statement was made at a formal interview, and in a private interview with Captain Grey he said "that the Ameer was desirous of securing a *pied à terre* in British territory whither to send his family and property when he cleared for action with Russia." Is it possible in the face of those statements to say that at that time he was unfriendly to England and friendly to Russia?

The noble Earl on the woolsack—who, by the way, in commenting upon the letters of Shere Ali to General Kaufmann, although he is doubtless accustomed, as he said, to interpret English documents, strangely misinterpreted the value of the ordinary terms of compliment employed in the East—after giving an account of the negotiations of 1873, turned round and asked whether any of your Lordships would have refused to grant what was then asked by Shere Ali and refused by me. I have again to come between one member of the present Administration and another, and to say that in his remarks addressed to me the noble and learned Earl was at the same time condemning his own Government. I had the honour of serving as Viceroy for two years under the Administration of the noble Earl opposite (the Earl of Beaconsfield). What happened in 1874? There was a debate in your Lordships' House in

which the subject of the negotiations of 1873 was thoroughly discussed; and what was then the opinion of the present Government? The opinion of the Government, as expressed in that debate, was that it was quite impossible to give Shere Ali what he wanted—namely, an unconditional guarantee of protection. But is that all? I served as Viceroy for two years after that, and did I receive any instructions to give Shere Ali the unconditional guarantee he wanted? Not one single despatch; not one single expression; not one single hint to that effect. “Here,” said the noble Viscount (Cranbrook), “is what ought to have been done—the guarantee ought to have been given,” and the noble Earl says that this was the thing that drove the Ameer into the arms of Russia. But look at the two despatches in which the noble Marquis opposite (Salisbury) instructed me in 1875 to obtain the admission of British Residents into Afghanistan. Is there a single word about giving additional assurances to the Ameer? Not a word; no suggestion whatever was made that any greater assurances of support should be given to him than I had given in 1873. So much so that I was obliged to remind the noble Marquis that if Shere Ali entertained the proposal, he would be certain to ask for some return. Therefore, I say that the charges brought against me by noble Lords opposite are really charges against the Government of which they themselves are members. There can, in fact, be no distinction drawn in this matter between the present and the late Government. I do not accuse the Government of doing anything wrong in the matter, for I do not believe any Government would do such a thing as to give Shere Ali an unconditional guarantee of protection—arms, ammunition, troops, whatever he liked—without asking for anything in return. This is what he asked; and this is what it is now said by the noble Earl on the woolsack that I ought to have given him.

“I have shown that during these eight years there had been no change of policy. The objects of the Governments in India and at home were the same; we all wanted the friendship of Afghanistan; our difference was as to

the means of securing it. In 1875 I received a despatch from the noble Marquis pointing out the desirability of our having a British Resident at Herat. I should have liked to have had on that frontier a British officer. I was not against the measure. Do not suppose I had the least desire to oppose it; but I thought it well to consult the officers of the Government who knew most about the matter. I was on the point of proceeding to Delhi. When I arrived there I consulted the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, and all the most experienced officers of the frontier. I also summoned two Native gentlemen of high character, who had been the Agents of the Government of India at Cabul, and who knew the Ameer well: one of them was the Nawab Ghulam Hussein Khan. I did not hold a formal conference, but I saw all these officers privately—one at a time—and asked them how the request would be likely to be entertained by Shere Ali, and what would be the best way of making it. They said that the admission of British Residents into Afghanistan was the one thing which the Ameer disliked more than another, and which was most likely to get us into trouble with him, and I made them write down their opinions that I might send them home. After that I had all the papers on the subject looked out and examined to see if there was any information which would warrant us in assuming that Shere Ali would receive a British Agent at Herat. The noble Marquis was under that impression. He wrote to the Government of India that “the Ameer has more than once in former years expressed his readiness to permit the presence of an Agent at Herat, and it is therefore not possible that, if his intentions are still loyal, he will make any serious difficulty now.” I was under the impression myself that at some time he might have said something to that effect. We found that Lord Mayo, at Umballa, had distinctly told the Ameer that he would not be asked to receive British officers in Afghanistan; but we thought that he might have said something in private conversations to the effect that he might accept them elsewhere than at Cabul. We wrote this to the Secretary of State, adding that what might have passed then could

not fairly be used in any negotiations with the Ameer. But since we examined into this matter in 1875, it has been set at rest by the evidence of Mr. Seton Karr, who was Foreign Secretary to Lord Mayo at Umballa, and was therefore completely acquainted with all that took place. Mr. Seton Karr came to me of his own accord the other day and said—"I want to tell you that it is quite a mistake to suppose that anything of the kind was ever said by the Ameer." Not only is Mr. Seton Karr's recollection clear on the point that Shere Ali never expressed his willingness to receive British officers in Afghanistan, but he gave an account of what occurred in a letter to Lord Lawrence, written on the 5th of April, 1869, immediately after the conferences at Umballa; which he has authorised me to use, and which contains the following passage :—"He" (Shere Ali) "is told that we don't want British officers as Residents at Cabul or anywhere else, and he says they would do him harm in the eyes of his people." Lord Mayo's official account of what took place has been strangely misinterpreted. It has even been said that the mission of British officers to Afghanistan was a boon which he denied to Shere Ali. This, however, is an error which is refuted by a private letter written on the 3rd of June, 1869, by Lord Mayo to the Duke of Argyll, in which Lord Mayo, summing up the Umballa conferences, wrote "the only pledges given were that we would not interfere in his affairs; that we would support his independence; that we would not force European officers as Residents upon him against his wish."

In June, 1875, the Government of India gave their opinion that it would not be wise to force British Residents on the Ameer. We thought it might lead to trouble, and, as servants of the Government, we thought it our duty to point that out. There was no hurry about the matter; and having been told by every one whose opinion was of any value that the course proposed was likely to alienate the Ameer, we stated our opinion to the Government; but the Government, notwithstanding the unanimous opinion of the Viceroy and his Council, replied that the course they had suggested must be followed. Again the Government of India, in January,

1876, pointed out the evil effects which in their opinion would follow from carrying out the instructions of the noble Marquis, in the hope that the matter might still be reconsidered by Her Majesty's Government.

In February, 1876, however, Lord Lytton, before leaving England, received distinct and positive instructions, both written and verbal, to insist that Shere Ali should receive British Residents in Afghanistan. My Lords, I do not wish to say a word against the proceedings of Lord Lytton; I know the difficulties and responsibilities of a Viceroy, and Lord Lytton seems to me to have carried out the instructions which he received. The responsibility rests, not upon him, but upon Her Majesty's Government. And here it is necessary to remember that there was no change of circumstances which made it necessary then to alter our relations with Afghanistan, for, as I have already shown to your Lordships, the Prime Minister declared in May, 1876, in the House of Commons, that the relations between Great Britain and Russia had never been more satisfactory.

The first step that was taken in India was to request Shere Ali to receive Sir Lewis Pelly at Cabul. On his declining to do so he was warned in July, 1876, that if he persisted he would isolate himself from the alliance and support of the British Government. My Lords, I consider that this was the turning point of the negotiations with the Ameer, and we know that three members of the Viceroy's Council, Sir Henry Norman, Sir Arthur Hobhouse, and Sir William Muir, dissented from the course which was then followed. As some exception has been taken to their conduct in making their dissent known, I must explain to your Lordships that the Government of India is not a government by a Viceroy, but by a Viceroy in Council; that ordinary matters are determined by the majority, and it is only in regard to matters essentially concerning the interests of India that the Viceroy has the power by law to overrule the majority. By statutory rules, framed by the Viceroy in Council under the Government of India Act, Members of Council have a right to express their dissent from any act done by the Government of India. These three

Members of Council expressed their dissent at the time. The Viceroy requested them to postpone the formal record of their dissent until a despatch was sent home reporting the proceedings ; but for some reason or other no despatch was sent home for a great length of time, indeed until May, 1877, when all three had left India. I do not blame Lord Lytton for detaining the despatch, for I do not know his reasons ; and I must add that I do not think it was done for the purpose of preventing the dissents from being recorded. Lord Lytton is an exceedingly able writer, and need not be afraid of answering any objection that might be raised by Members of his Council. But whatever the reason may have been, it is totally contrary to the practice that the course of important affairs should not be frequently reported to the Home Government. As those Members of Council were debarred from the usual opportunity of recording their dissent from the course taken in July, 1876, I have no hesitation in expressing my opinion that when the despatch of the Government of India of the 10th of May, 1877, was made public, they were fully justified in also making public their dissent. If they had not done so it must have been supposed that they were consenting parties to the policy described in the despatch as having been pursued by the Government of India when they were members of that Government, and responsible for its action.

To return to the negotiations with Shere Ali. The next important step followed in October, 1876, when the Ameer was plainly told that if he did not receive British officers in his territories he would lose all the protection he had hitherto obtained from England. At one time it was thought he would not give way ; but "owing to helplessness" he said he must agree to the demands of the British Government. He said, in substance,—Let my Envoy meet Sir Lewis Pelly, explain my difficulties, and if after this the Viceroy will not give way, I must.

My Lords, I should like to dwell somewhat upon the conferences at Peshawur, but time forbids it. I have no fault to find with the manner in which Sir Lewis Pelly

carried out the instructions which he had received; he certainly carried them out with great determination. He began by telling the Prime Minister that the Viceroy desired to remove some misapprehensions in the mind of the Ameer. The Prime Minister replied that the Ameer had none; and when he was told that these misapprehensions had arisen out of the conference with Lord Mayo at Umballa, and the communications with Lord Northbrook in 1873, the Envoy said that the Ameer went away from Umballa perfectly satisfied, and that the communications with Lord Northbrook in 1873 were satisfactory also. What weighed most in the Ameer's mind, he said, was the policy of the present Viceroy, which was different from that of previous Viceroys, in forcing the Ameer to receive British officers as Residents in Afghanistan, contrary to the Treaty of 1857 with Dost Mahomed, and to all the "agreements," "writings," and "assurances" he had received from Lord Lawrence, Lord Mayo, and myself. The conference concluded by Sir Lewis Pelly, at the Prime Minister's request, submitting his objections for the consideration of the Viceroy. Sir Lewis Pelly was then instructed to demand a distinct and prompt answer whether or no the Ameer refused to receive British officers in any part of Afghanistan. On this point, however, no answer was ever given in consequence of the death of the Prime Minister. It is a very extraordinary thing that no explanation has been given why this demand was not pressed further, for it was clear that the object of the British Government was to place British Residents in Afghanistan; and there is reason to believe that under great pressure, and under great apprehensions, the Ameer would have given way. Indeed, it appears from the despatch of the Government of India of the 10th of May, 1877, that Lord Lytton knew that another Envoy was on his way from Cabul, who was reported to have "authority to accept eventually all the conditions of the British Government." Sir Lewis Pelly was nevertheless instructed, on the 30th of March, to close the conference at once.

! Something has been said of the conduct of the Ameer at that time as justifying the close of the negotiations. It

seems that he had been raising the cry of "jehad," or of a religious war, and using hostile language towards the British Government. My Lords, I am not going to defend this suspicious Ameer, for I think he behaved very foolishly throughout these transactions. But it is only fair to look at the circumstances under which he was then placed. The occupation of Quetta occurred in October, 1876, just at the time when the Ameer was most frightened at the menacing language of the British Government. Preparations were made about the same time at Rawul Pindee to assemble a force; a bridge was thrown across the Indus, and I believe that arrangements were actually made to send a column up to the Kurram Valley, which is on the direct route to Cabul. Besides this, the Viceroy had recently seen the Maharaja of Cashmere and encouraged him to advance against some territory on the North-East of Afghanistan, over which Shere Ali claimed sovereignty. Nothing is said about all this in the papers laid before Parliament, but there is no doubt about the facts. They have been stated in Parliament without contradiction. The truth seems to me to be that the poor Ameer could not form any other conclusion than that the British Government were on the point of attacking him, and he turned to every side to see what defence he could make. He found, however, that the people around him did not wish to quarrel with the British Government, and we are told by the Government of India that the whole movement had "completely collapsed" before the close of the Peshawur Conference.

The conference was closed in March, 1877. When the Viceroy closed the conference he took away from the Ameer every assurance that he had received of protection and support from Lord Lawrence, Lord Mayo, and myself, either for himself or for his dynasty. He withdrew our Native Agent from Cabul, and therefore deprived the Ameer of the means of communicating with the British Government; and perhaps the noble Marquis opposite will explain what door was then left open to the Ameer. Neither the noble Viscount (Viscount Cranbrook) nor the noble Earl on the woolsack have alluded to the real

result of the Peshawur conferences, and the noble Viscount described the position of affairs most inadequately in his despatch of the 28th of November last, by saying that we had assumed towards the Ameer a position of "vigilant reserve." My Lords, these were the circumstances of the case. I think the course pursued was not wise. When the Government found that the Ameer was not willing to receive British Residents in Afghanistan, they need not have altogether broken off from him, or have led him to feel that he had nothing to expect from the British Government. If a different course had been taken, and time had been given him, his feelings were such that he would, I believe, in the end have accepted their terms, however hard he might have thought them to be.

Then came a time of real difficulty, when it was necessary that closer relations should be maintained with Afghanistan. That necessity arose on account of the political condition of Europe, England and Russia having been gradually brought to the verge of war. It would then have been right to have strengthened our relations with the Ameer, but in what position had Her Majesty's Government then placed this country with reference to Afghanistan? By pushing forward demands which were not necessary, contrary to all Indian advice, when there existed no crisis whatever, they had so alienated the Ameer that it would have been almost humiliating then to have made any advances towards him. The Secretary of State (Viscount Cranbrook) used an expression in regard to the state of things in 1873 which is far more applicable to the policy of 1876, namely, that "it was too late." The policy of Her Majesty's Government made it "too late" to make a friend of the Ameer when it was really wanted. It may be said that I ought not to content myself with offering criticisms on the conduct of the Government, but should indicate what I think ought to have been done. I say that if the Ameer had not been frightened about the reception of British Residents in Afghanistan, the moment there was a probability of a war between Russia and England the Viceroy ought to have communicated with him, arranged for

a meeting, and offered to enter into an agreement with him similar to that entered into with his father in 1857. I am satisfied that he would have readily accepted such an offer. The policy of the Government, however, prevented that being done, and this, I believe, was one of the main causes of the war.

Then came the last stage of these transactions. The Ameer was alienated from us, he had no hope of support from us, he had no Native Agent of ours at his Court. It was arranged at Simla in 1873, that if he were asked to receive a Russian Mission he should at once consult the Government of India; but this was impossible as our Native Agent had been withdrawn. The Ameer had been told that we did not care either about him or his dynasty. When, therefore, the Russian Mission was pressed upon him, as he could look for no protection from us, he had no alternative but to accept it, and it seems that he did so unwillingly. When this was first known, it appears to me that the Government of India rightly intimated to Her Majesty's Government in their telegram of the 30th of July that the matter was one which ought to be settled between the British and Russian Governments, and not between the British Government and Afghanistan. When England and Russia were on the verge of war it is true that neither country could fairly be held to be bound by the arrangements of 1873 or 1875 in regard to Central Asia. But before the Russian Mission reached Cabul the Treaty of Berlin had been signed, and I agree with the noble Earl on the cross benches (Earl of Derby) that the Government should have dealt with Russia and not with Afghanistan. I believe, moreover, that they might have come to a peaceful and satisfactory understanding with Russia, and have avoided the present war. Russia was asked, no doubt, to withdraw the Mission from Cabul; but I am surprised at the satisfaction expressed by the noble Earl on the woolsack at the answer received to that demand. In fact, having received no satisfactory answer from Russia, Her Majesty's Government went to war with Afghanistan. I will not dwell on the circumstances connected with the despatch of Sir Neville

Chamberlain's Mission, because from the beginning I can only regard it as a declaration of war.

My Lords, I have trespassed so long upon your indulgence that I shall say no more excepting that I believe this war was unnecessary, and that with the exercise of a little common prudence on the part of Her Majesty's Government it might have been avoided. No advantage, I am convinced, can result from it, either to England or to India; and holding these views I feel myself reluctantly obliged to vote for the amendment proposed by my noble friend behind me.

THE RESULTS OF THE AFGHAN WAR.

THE curtain has fallen on the second Afghan war almost as suddenly as it rose, and the public—in so far as it is represented by the London Press and the London world—seems almost ashamed at having been deluded into taking an interest in so small and ephemeral a matter. A reaction of this nature is perhaps the natural consequence of the exaggerated tone which was taken at the outset by the opponents of the war, in regard to its character and the risks that it involved. The late Lord Sandhurst, it is well known, affirmed a few years back that it would not be safe to advance on Candahar with a less force than 30,000 men, and the expense of such an enterprise was popularly estimated at twenty millions of money. We were told, indeed, that our so-called 'Jingoism in the East' would inevitably lead either to national disaster or national bankruptcy; and now, because these sinister predictions have not been realised, but, on the contrary, a short, inexpensive, and not inglorious campaign, skilfully conducted and bravely supported, has been crowned with a peace promising substantial political results, we are taunted with having made a mountain of a molehill, with having raised a hobgoblin for the mere purpose of laying it, and, in fact, with having betrayed the nation into a needless and unseemly exhibition of alarm.

I cannot take blame to myself for having fallen into either of these two errors of exaggeration. I certainly never gave any countenance, on the one hand, to the supposed military difficulties of invading Afghanistan: on the contrary, I always anticipated that at Candahar we should be received as liberators by the great majority of the population, and I further stated my conviction that the Afghans were but feeble enemies in the field, so feeble, indeed, that a small well-appointed British force might march triumphantly from one end of the country to the other; but on the other hand, I believed then—as I believe now—that India was last year threatened with a real and formidable danger, which required to be met with an earnest and skilful frontage of defence; and I may add that in my opinion this danger, although averted at the time by the fearless attitude and the vigorous measures of the Viceroy, and thrown still further into the

background by the conditions of the Treaty of Gandamak, may at any moment revive if our vigilance relax, or if, under the influence of party feeling, our recent political action in Asia should by some future Government be reversed.

It is important that we should realise to ourselves the nature and extent of the danger which threatened us, if we would appreciate the true value of our line of defence, and I address myself therefore in the first instance to this consideration. If the Berlin Conference had fallen through in the summer of last year—and for weeks, it must be remembered, the issue trembled in the balance—it is almost certain that there would have been a Russian military occupation of Afghanistan in support of Shir Ali's authority, Kaufmann's force, which had advanced to Jam, being thrown across the Oxus upon Herat, while an auxiliary column strengthened the Afghan position at Cabul; and we should have been thus committed to an immediate conflict with our great European rival on the Indus as well as on the Bosphorus. When the Treaty of Berlin, however, was signed on the 13th of July, the Russian programme underwent a considerable modification, and the danger upon our Indian frontier assumed a different form. Instead of preparation for direct hostility, the Russian object was now shifted to the acquisition of a dominant position at the Court of Cabul, from whence a friendly communication might be kept up with the neighbouring Indian States, and a preliminary skirmishing array of intrigue and agitation might be directed against the Indian border. The main feature of the new line of attack was, of course, the establishment of Stolitoff's mission at Cabul; but there were many subsidiary preparations of hardly less importance—preparations, indeed, which, as they proved abortive, have not hitherto received much attention, but which, if they had been unchecked by our invasion, might have been developed into very serious causes of annoyance. What may have been the precise conditions of the proposed Russo-Afghan alliance has not yet transpired, though no doubt the confidential correspondence between Kaufmann and Shir Ali which preceded Stolitoff's mission has ere this been placed in the Viceroy's hands by Yacûb Khan; but we cannot go far wrong in assuming that the Russian treaty with Cabul, *mutatis mutandis*, would have been very much the same as our own: that is, it would have provided for the exclusive Russian control of the Afghan relations with foreign Governments, exactly as we have provided in a contrary sense for retaining that control in our own hands.

A further light is thrown on the aggressive policy of Russia by her proceedings at other points of the Afghan frontier simultaneously with her diplomatic venture at Cabul. She seems for a long time past to have cast a covetous and curious eye on the passes leading [down direct upon India from the Upper Oxus valley, judging—and judging truly—that a post near these passes, either at Sarik-kul, or Sir-had-Vakhân, or even at Panjah, would not only protect and consolidate

her recent acquisition of territory on the Pamír plateau, but would also serve as a most convenient position for pushing her further reconnaissance to the south. From such a point, indeed, in one direction, she might communicate with Cashmír through Yassin and Gilgít, and in another with the semi-independent States north of the Cabul river, through Mastúj and Chitrál. During last autumn Russia thus launched three tentative expeditions upon the region in question under the guise of geographical exploration. The first expedition led by M. Oshanin, after successfully pushing on along the old Mohammedan road from Hissar to Rasht, and tracing the Surkháb through Karategín to the junction of the Muk river, was unable to force its way from the glacier-fed sources of this stream over the heights of the Trans-Alái range to Pamír, and the spirited leader of the party was unable, therefore, to realise his hope 'of writing his next letter from Sarik-kul or Darkut,' the latter name applying to the famous pass on the Cashmír frontier where poor Hayward was murdered some fifteen years ago. The second party, led by M. Severtsoff, which had been originally detailed for service with the eastern column of the Afghan expeditionary force commanded by Abramoff, approached nearer to the promised land at the sources of the Oxus, having crossed the Pamír from north to south by the lakes Kara-kúl, Rang-kúl, and Yeshil-kúl to the immediate vicinity of the Shignán villages, so as to leave not more than twenty or thirty miles of unvisited country, along the banks of the Aksu or Morgháb river, between the respective limits of English and Russian survey. The political importance of this last exploration is considerable; for Russia appears to extend the elastic frontiers of her Kokand dependencies in harmony with the advance of her surveying parties to the south, and she may thus claim to have now annexed the whole of the Alichúr Pamír, instead of stopping short at the Aksu or Morgháb river, which, being a longer and larger stream than the Panj, is regarded by geographers as the true Oxus, forming, under the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1872, the northern boundary of the Afghan territory.¹ Severtsoff's orders appear to have been to carry his survey up to Victoria Lake, and beyond into the Vakhán valley, which would have brought him within hail of the coveted passes; but a failure of provisions compelled him to return from the Shignán border. A more direct attempt to open up relations with the tribes within the great range, and who have always been more or less connected with India, was made by Colonel Matveyef, who, accompanied by an astronomer and topographer, actually penetrated, in September last, to Fyzabad, the capital of Badakhshán, and, in virtue of the Russian alliance with Shir Ali, claimed from the Afghan governor escorts and introductions to the chiefs of Yassin and Chitrál. Fortunately the application failed, owing as

¹ See *England and Russia in the East*, 2nd edition, p. 319.

much to the influential position already secured by Major Biddulph in the mountains, as to the suspicions of the Badakhshání ruler, who not unnaturally mistrusted his scientific visitor: otherwise a basis of Russian intrigue might have been established at Mastúj, which would have demoralised the tribe chiefs of Dardistán, as far as the frontiers of Peshawer. At the same time Russia, taking advantage of Shir Ali's friendliness, despatched an officer, Captain Bykoff, to survey the Oxus from the junction of the Surkháb (or Vakhsh) to Petro-Alexandrofsk, with a view to determine the fitness of the great river for steam navigation. This survey was eminently successful. The Oxus was proved to be navigable as high up as the frontier of Badakhshán, and though up to the present time there is only one vessel, the 'Samarcand,' employed in the navigation, and, owing to difficulties about the supply of fuel, she has not ascended higher than Khoja-Saleh, where the Afghan territory commences, it may be taken for granted that before long a steam flotilla will be established on the river, to the great advantage of commerce and with the certain effect of impressing deeply both Afghans and Uzbegs with the power and resources of the Russian Government. The most significant step, however, that was taken by Russia during this halcyon period of her relations with Cabul was to employ Colonel Grodekoff, an accomplished officer of the Etat-Major, to survey the route from the Oxus to Herat along the line by Sir-i-púl and Mymeneh, which leads direct from the Russian head-quarters at Samarcand. Colonel Grodekoff, having accomplished this duty in a very masterly manner, continued his reconnaissance through Khorassán to the Caspian, and has now, it is said, joined the staff of the Turcoman army, in order to give General Lazareff the benefit of his experience on the advance of the Russian troops towards the great centre of interest at Herat.

From these several indications there can be little doubt, I think, but that Russia, although restrained from active hostility against England by the European pacification guaranteed under the Treaty of Berlin, did nevertheless, in disregard of the spirit of that Treaty, contemplate a continued adverse pressure upon India through the establishment of a strong political influence in the countries to the south of the Oxus; Herat, Cabul, and Badakhshán being the positions to which her attention was especially directed as the most favourable stand-points for maintaining and directing an insurrectionary propagandism. A certain diplomatic reticence has been observed—and very properly—in all our Ministerial declarations, as to how far the Afghan war was precipitated by the proceedings of Russia, or to what extent it aimed at counteracting her policy. The indignities and injuries which we had sustained at the hands of Shir Ali, together with the necessity of rectifying our 'haphazard' frontier along the Indus valley, were put forward as the ostensible causes of the war. With the exception, indeed, of two notable instances

of plain speaking—first, the famous declaration of Lord Lytton, in the Simla manifesto of 1878, that ‘the British Government would not tolerate interference on the part of any other Power in the internal affairs of Afghanistan;’ and, secondly, Lord Salisbury’s categorical demand for the withdrawal of Stolitoff’s mission from the Court of the Amir, as at variance with the repeated pledges given by Russia that Cabul was beyond the scope of her political action—there has really been nothing to draw public attention to the importance of the Russian factor in our dealings with the Afghan question; and yet in reality that factor was the essential element of the whole transaction. It was especially to counteract Russian influence that we originally embarked in the war, and—which is still more to the point—it is the third article of the Treaty of Gandamak, binding the Amir to conduct all his foreign relations in accordance with the advice and wishes of the British Government, which constitutes the touchstone of our present success and gives us our best assurance of security in the future. On the satisfactory nature of the general principles involved in the treaty there cannot be two opinions. It is just the sort of agreement that we might have required Dost Mahomed Khan to sign when we gave him back his country in 1842—with the solitary exception, perhaps, of the clause relating to a permanent British Resident at Cabul—and which, at any period from that time to the present, would have fulfilled all our legitimate expectations in regard to the Afghan alliance. Our main object has ever been, since the date of Lord Auckland’s famous Simla Manifesto of 1838, to obtain the establishment of ‘a strong friendly and independent power’ on the north-western frontier of India, without, however, accepting any crushing liabilities in return; and this is what seems to have now for the first time been placed within our grasp by the provisions of the Treaty of Gandamak. This treaty, indeed, is not more remarkable for what it specifies than for what it omits; for while the third article disposes once for all of the Russian pretensions and at the same time guarantees the Cabul State against foreign pressure or aggression—a responsibility which, although not previously formalised, must in reality always have attached to us—it carefully avoids that much more embarrassing obligation of a personal or dynastic guarantee against domestic enemies. In presence of a danger which menaces the safety of India we are content to pledge the resources of the Empire, but in view of the vicissitudes of civil warfare which do not immediately concern us, whether resulting from misgovernment, or faction, or family competition, we retain a perfect liberty of action, according to the exigencies of the time. It is probable that Major Cavagnari had to encounter some importunity on this latter point, for in the many-headed family of Payendeh Khan there will always be pretenders discontented with their lot and ready, if the occasion offered, to strike in for power;

and against such disturbers of the peace a British guarantee would have been a most acceptable security: but Yacúb Khan was no doubt early disabused of any expectations he may have formed on this head. It was probably pointed out to him that, fortified with the prestige of a British alliance, and commanding through the subsidy the best means of acquiring popular support, he was placed in a position immeasurably superior to all competitors, while there was the further obvious argument in his favour, that, so long as he was competent to govern and loyal in his relations to his ally, it must be to our interest to strengthen his position so as to enable him to put down disorder or disaffection upon the frontier. But whatever may have been the exact scope of the discussions which passed between Cavagnari and Yacúb Khan at Gandamak, it is at any rate a matter of congratulation that we have escaped from the entanglement of a personal guarantee, and the more so as on former occasions this question was made the crucial test of our sincerity, and upon it, indeed, the Simla negotiations of 1873 are believed to have been finally shipwrecked.

It may seem to be an ungracious—almost an unpatriotic—task to expose the weak points, if there are any, of the alliance that we have formed. Napoleon's famous advice 'to wash dirty linen at home' has become proverbial, and no doubt there are occasions when it may be inexpedient for a Government to take the public too much into its confidence; but in regard to our Afghan policy, I am disposed to deprecate any attempt at concealment. If, as is asserted by Lord Lytton's critics, we blundered into war and have still more blundered into peace; if the barrier that we have sought to establish on the north-west frontier of India be no barrier; if the hollowness, the insecurity, and the expense of our Afghan alliance constitute an evil not less hurtful or far-reaching than Shir Ali's direct hostility, then let the miscarriage of our policy be made known while there is yet time to retrieve our position. Of all possible political dilemmas a fool's paradise is the worst. It is in a spirit, then, of strict impartiality, with no desire to exaggerate our advantages or to ignore the dangers of the future, that I proceed briefly, and according to such lights as I possess, to estimate and compare the *pros* and *cons* of the Treaty of Gandamak.

The value of Yacúb Khan's engagement to place his foreign relations in our hands and to be guided entirely by our advice, depends of course, in the first place, on the stability of his power. That power cannot be regarded at present as completely established. There is insurrection in Badakhshán, where Mir Baba Khan, the nephew of the hereditary chief Jehandar Shah, has with the assistance of the chiefs of Shighnán and Darwáz—both of whom, it must be remembered, are more or less dependent upon Bokhara, and through Bokhara upon Russia, whose acquiescence in the enterprise was thus indispensable

to its success. His own interest is that a similar alliance with Shir Ali's son should be inclined that condition be recognised. Afghan Power. There are even at Kandahar prevailed rival, making every opportunity of these drawbacks of the British arch-enemy the Confession at Candahar blushing son or be and this is the best commitment to the side to be snipped necine v in 1879 under the me situation fray.

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to its success—lately expelled the Afghan Governor, and proclaimed his own independence of Cabul. There is some reason to apprehend that a similar revolution may be attempted at Herat, where Yacúb Khan's own brother, Ayúb Khan, who was for many years, during Shir Ali's lifetime, a refugee and pensioner at Teheran, is reported to be inclined to throw off his allegiance to Cabul, hoping to revive that condition of voluntary vassalage to Persia which, although unrecognised by treaty, has been the normal condition of the Western Afghan Principality, almost from the time of Yar Mahomed's death. There are likely also to be troubles at Sir-i-púl and Mymeneh and even at Balkh, where Uzbek influence has always to a certain extent prevailed, and where Abdur-Rahman, Yacúb Khan's most formidable rival, may be expected, unless withheld by Russia, to avail himself of every opportunity to foment intrigue and disaffection. But with all these drawbacks, the prospect is not on the whole unfavourable. One of the best informed, indeed, of the Afghan nobles, the son of that arch-intriguer, Núr Mahomed Shah, who died at Peshawer during the Conference, lately stated it as his opinion to our Political Agent at Candahar that 'Yacúb Khan would have little difficulty in establishing himself firmly on the throne, not because he was Shir Ali's son or because the people liked him, but because he was our nominee;' and this sentiment has been repeated in numerous quarters, and by the best authorities in the country. For my own part, having already committed myself to the opinion that if we had continued our subsidy to Shir Ali Khan, after Dost Mahomed's death, 'he would have nipped insurrection in the bud and thus escaped five years of internecine war,' I am only too rejoiced to see the error of 1863 redeemed in 1879, and confidently anticipate that success for the son which, under similar circumstances, I predicted for the father, although in the meantime local difficulties have no doubt increased, and the situation has been much aggravated by Russia's mingling in the fray.

The next question to consider is the rectification of frontier. Now, it seems to me that, in so far as regards local requirements, an undue importance has been given to the distinction between a 'scientific' and a 'haphazard' frontier. No frontier, however scientific, unless it be constructed on the scale of the great wall of China, can be locally effective as a barrier against the inroads of barbarous tribes. If, indeed, we had secured every great pass in the Sulimán range by military posts at the upper as well as the lower end, so as to take the Vazírí tribes and their allies in reverse, we still could not have dispensed with police patrols for the protection of the villagers of the plain against raiders from the hills, who might swarm down upon any exposed point from the multitudinous minor ravines. All that we seem to have aimed at in the treaty, and all that has been probably contemplated since the frontier question came into prominent notice,

has been the establishment of certain posts upon the Afghan border which would afford the greatest combined amount of political and military strength—political strength in dominating the regions beyond with a view to moral support as well as to pressure, and military strength in obtaining commanding strategical positions that might serve equally for attack and defence.

The political question may be first considered. The Khyber Pass is not perhaps naturally the most convenient avenue of approach to India from the north, but it has now come to be considered the high road of communication, and as long as the Afghan capital remains at Cabul, and the British frontier head-quarters are fixed at Peshawer—to say nothing of the convenience of the Indus bridge at Attock and of the railway from Lahore to be extended to that point—so long will this line form our chief object of attention. It will excite no surprise, therefore, that in the interests of commerce, as well as to strengthen our position at Peshawer, we should have decided permanently and effectively to occupy this celebrated defile from its mouth to Lundi Khana (together with the parallel pass of Michni); not, however, taking over this narrow strip of land from the Afghan Government either in cession or assignment, but assuming the passes to have always belonged to the independent Khyber tribes, who at the beginning of the war formally transferred the control to our hands on certain definite conditions of service and subsidy, which conditions are still, and will continue to be, in force. It is probable that, for a time at any rate—so inveterate are the lawless habits of the Pass Afridis—the maintenance of a free communication through the Khyber may be a task of difficulty and danger. The Government of India, indeed, has shown its sense of the importance of the duty by naming a special officer to the charge; but as time rolls on and the security and convenience of regular monthly payment is contrasted with the risks of plunder and the fluctuations of a compulsory black-mail, it is hardly possible to doubt but that the tribes will be gradually humanised and brought under effective control. A more serious inconvenience may perhaps be felt in the jealousy and distaste with which the Cabul authorities must naturally view our appropriation of a strip of country over which in ordinary times they may not have exercised jurisdiction, but to which they have always asserted a territorial right, and where, indeed, they have put that right in force by garrisoning Ali Masjid whenever the military necessity for such an occupation has arisen.

The most important frontier arrangement, however, in its effect upon our relations with Cabul, is no doubt the retention in our own hands of the protection and administrative control of the district of Kuram. This extension of our military frontier, giving us, at a minimum of cost and responsibility, a commanding hold upon Cabul, was strongly advocated by Sir Herbert Edwardes more than twenty

years ago, and the scheme would have been probably carried out, either then or at a later period, as a means of support to Dost Mahomed Khan's authority, but for the uncompromising opposition of Sir John Lawrence, who, indeed, as it is well known, would, as a measure of policy, have surrendered all our Trans-Indus possessions to the Afghans. Sir H. Edwardes pointed out that the Kuram frontier was but five marches from Cabul through the open and fertile valley of Logur; that the Bangash and Túrí tribes, who formed the great bulk of the inhabitants, were opposed to the Afghans both in religion and nationality, and thus naturally looked to the English for protection; that the communication between Kuram and our base on the Indus valley was perfect; that the net revenue, amounting to about 10,000*l.* per annum, would meet all the expenses of civil government, and that the location of a force of four or five thousand men in the valley would place our frontier defences on a footing of unassailable strength. Sir H. Edwardes' recommendations have not been implicitly followed under the present arrangement, the district being only temporarily assigned to us, and the force detailed for the occupation being considerably below his estimate; but the essential point advocated by him has at any rate been secured, a British garrison being now established in a position which politically dominates Cabul, and gives us, moreover, a strategic post of immense importance, either for offence or defence. The boundaries of the Kuram district are to be settled by a Commission. They will probably not include Khost, which our recent experience has shown to be much exposed, though the entrance to that valley will always be commanded by our post at Thal; and it would further, perhaps, be a prudent act of deference to Afghan sensibilities if our direct control were not extended beyond Ali Kheil, the administration of the hill country between that point and the Shutar-gardan, which has hitherto appertained to Kuram, remaining with Yacúb Khan's officers, subject, however, to our friendly supervision. It is hardly to be expected that the Mangals and Jájís, tribes of pure Afghan extraction, who have given us so much trouble during our recent occupation, will at once settle down into peaceful citizens; but even if they continue their depredations, the mode of dealing with them will be a mere question of police and devoid of political significance.

Our general political interests are more involved, perhaps, in the Pishín question than in that of the Khyber Pass or of Kuram. On the broad ground of protecting India from invasion or from hostile demonstration from the west—and this ground constitutes, it must be remembered, the main political value of Afghanistan—there can be no doubt of the extreme importance of Candahar; and great disappointment has been accordingly expressed at our avowed intention not to maintain that position. Having occupied the city without resistance; having overcome all difficulties of carriage and communi-

cation with our base; being on the best terms with the inhabitants of the province—for the isolated attacks of fanatics cannot be held to vitiate the generally friendly bearing of the people; enjoying the amenities and the sanitary blessings of an admirable climate; with ample shelter for our troops, and with supplies of all descriptions—not only necessities but luxuries—pouring in upon us in profusion; why, it is asked, should we voluntarily surrender all these special advantages, the fruits of our conquest, and retire within the Khoja-Amrán hills, where every convenience of settlement has yet to be created? The answer is simply this, that the principle of the retrocession of Candahar was indispensable to the success of our negotiations and general arrangements with Yacúb Khan. Whether he would have consented to a peace which did not provide for such a territorial restoration may be doubted; but even if he had so consented under pressure it would have been almost suicidal on our part to have accepted his acquiescence. Our object, it must be repeated, was to create ‘a strong friendly and independent power’ on the north-west frontier of India; whereas, if we had forcibly dis severed Candahar from Cabul, Herat would have infallibly followed suit, Turkestan would have next seceded, and the Afghan monarchy would have been irretrievably split up and destroyed. Under certain conditions—that is, if Cabul were decidedly hostile, as she threatened to become during the later years of Shir Ali’s rule—this dismemberment of the Afghan State might not be an undesirable consummation, but it was manifestly not to our advantage to risk such a catastrophe at the present time, with Russia and Persia watching eagerly for an opening to interfere; and we have accordingly very properly, as I think, resisted on broad political grounds the temptation to include Western Afghanistan among the assigned districts.

Whether at the same time it may not be advisable to arrange for the temporary retention of our garrison in a post of such strategic importance as the town of Candahar, after the civil government of the province has been restored to the hands of Afghan officials, is a question that is well worthy of consideration, and to which I shall again refer when discussing our military frontier. As the treaty stands at present, Candahar is definitively abandoned to the Afghans, and our troops are by amicable arrangement to evacuate the district as soon as the weather admits of the movement, retiring across the Khojak Pass upon Pishín, which we are to hold upon the same terms as Kuram and Sibí. Now, Pishín is in many respects well suited for the site of a frontier cantonment. The valley is compact and of moderate extent, well watered and cultivated, and inhabited for the most part by industrious Tor-Tiríns and Syuds, who are employed either in agriculture or trade, and are likely to prove obedient and orderly subjects, while their immediate neighbours, the Atchikzyes of the Khoja-Amrán

range, and the Western Kakers, are among the least turbulent of the Afghan tribesmen. And although at first sight it might seem probable that friction would arise from the strange medley of jurisdictions which will prevail under the new treaty arrangement in the districts between Candahar and Cutchee, that objection need not much disturb us. North of the Khojak Pass, for instance, the Cabul Amir will be supreme; while to the south of the range, in the assigned district of Pishín, English law will prevail. Quetta again, the Bolan Pass, and adjoining districts, will belong to Kelat, with the exception of Sibí, which is temporarily assigned to us by the Treaty of Ganda-mak; while the Afghan Kakers, through whose country will lie the only lines of direct communication between Pishín and the Indus valley, are virtually independent of Cabul, and the Belooch tribes of Murrie and Boogtie, further south, between the Kaker country and Sindé, are virtually independent of Kelat. But practically, no doubt, we shall do pretty much as we please throughout the entire region, and, indeed, I can only look on the present nominal reservation of rights as the transition stage between independence and annexation.

The military aspect of the frontier rectification must be considered separately. It is desirable in the first place to formalise the orographical statistics of the frontier—that is, to show the several routes by which armies at different periods of history have crossed the mountains leading from the Afghan plateau upon India. Alexander traversed the Yussufzye country, north of the Cabul river, along a line almost impracticable to a modern army; while throughout the Buddhistic period which succeeded the Greek, if we may judge by the monuments which line the entire route from Cabul to the Indus, the Indo-Scythian invaders must have always followed the present high road by Jellalabad and the Khyber to Peshawer. When Ghazni became the capital, the ordinary route led by Gardiz and Furmúl to Bunnoo, at the foot of the mountains, this being the line described by Birúni, who was at Mahmud's Court, as well as by the contemporary geographer Mokadassí; but during the rule of the later Ghaznevídes, as well as under the Ghoríde kings, who founded the city of Kermán on the southern slopes of the Sufíd-koh, the Kuram valley seems to have become the high road of commerce and war, though the Khyber Pass—that is, the line from Farshabúr to Nagrahar (Peshawer to Jellalabad)—was sometimes followed. Chinghiz Khan and Timur both elected in their invasions of India the Hariyáb and Kuram route, while Baber, who himself came down the Khyber, gives the preference, after full inquiry, to the route through the Furmúl valley, as the shortest and easiest passage of the mountains. Of the remaining passes further south I may add that there is no instance, as far as I know, of an army having ever passed by the Gomál or Ghwalari route, though, as the shortest in distance, it is the favourite caravan line at the present day from Candahar to the Indus

valley. The usual route from Candahar or the vicinity to the south-east has always been by the Tall-Chotiálí valley, recently explored and mapped by General Biddulph, Baber having passed through this region—which is tolerably open after the Sulimán range has been once turned—to Ghazni, and Prince Dará Shekoh to Candahar. Nadir Shah alone of all the historical invaders of India seems to have traversed the Bolan Pass.

No doubt these historical traditions had their due weight in determining the Viceroy to limit his frontier rectification to three principal points. His first consideration would be that by holding and fortifying the Khyber and Michni passes, all approach to Peshawer from the west and north would be effectually barred, while at the same time Jellalabad would be placed, as it were, permanently under fire. It would be evident in the next place that the occupation of Kuram, supported by a strong post at Thal, and to be connected in due course with the Punjab Railway system, would be a most important military arrangement, commanding as it would the three lines by Furmúl, by Khost, and by the Píwar Pass; while, at the same time, the control exercised by us over the Shutar-gardan Pass from our extreme frontier post at Ali Kheil would virtually place the town of Cabul at our disposal, the distance from the pass to the Capital being only about sixty miles through the open and well-watered valley of Logur. The third point, Pishín, selected by the Viceroy for rectification, has the same strategic importance for Western Afghanistan that Kuram possesses for the eastern division of the country, inasmuch as all the various routes from the Indus to Candahar by the Zhob, the Borí and the Tall-Chotiálí valleys, as well as the high road by the Bolan and Quetta, concentrate in the plain of Pishín, from whence they are severally continued to the north by one or other of the various easy passes which intersect the Khoja-Amrán range. Our best strategical authorities, headed by Lord Napier of Magdala and General Hamley, are of opinion that, in view of the probable requirements of the situation at no distant period, Candahar itself is a far stronger and a far more desirable military position than Pishín, notwithstanding the increased difficulty which its occupation would involve of communicating with India, and notwithstanding the unsymmetrical contour which would be given to the frontier by so abrupt and extensive a projection of British territory to the northward; and I confess that as a military man I am strongly inclined to adopt their reasoning. Looking, indeed, to the certainty that if military danger does approach India, it must come, not from the north, but from the north-west, as the line of least resistance, and foreseeing the necessity, under such circumstances, of keeping a vigilant watch upon Herat, where the great interest of the situation will be focussed, I feel the utmost reluctance to give up our hold on Candahar, so admirably fitted as it is both for observation and for

support. Now, I have never coveted nor recommended the annexation of Western Afghanistan. On the contrary, I have frequently pointed out that to undertake the responsibilities of the civil government of the province would be a source to us of weakness rather than of strength, and I have now brought forward the additional argument that to amputate a limb of this magnitude from the Afghan State at the present juncture would be to wreck the monarchy; but a mere temporary military occupation, guarded from all semblance of administrative interference, and undertaken with the full approval of the Cabul Government, does not seem to me to be open to the same objection, but, on the contrary, to be nothing more than a legitimate—almost a necessary—precaution of defence, when a serious Russian expedition is advancing from the Caspian with the scarcely disguised object of threatening the frontier of Herat. So strong, indeed, is my conviction of the soundness of this view, so self-evident does it appear to me that as the Russian cloud spreads to the eastward, and begins to darken over Merv, the Afghans must needs put all jealousy on one side and in the instinct of self-preservation apply to us for aid to meet the storm, that I should almost doubt if the order for retiring in September from Candahar would really be carried out; or if, in order to fulfil the letter of the treaty engagement, the British troops were to cross the Khojak Pass at the appointed time, I should look with confidence to their return at no distant date on Yacúb Khan's own requisition, and with the view of furnishing an auxiliary column for the defence of the western frontier of Afghanistan. I shall glance again at this question of the surrender of Candahar when I come to consider the progress and probable results of the Russian advance.

The remaining articles of the treaty do not require any very special consideration. The amnesty clause supplies a want that was deeply felt when we evacuated the Afghan country in 1842. On that occasion the native Minister, who had supplied the Candahar army during the whole period of trouble, but for whose safety, in spite of all my efforts to the contrary, no precautions were taken, said to me with bitter emphasis as the last troops marched out of the town, 'You have saved your own army, but you have sacrificed us;' and, in point of fact, on the return of the Baruckzye Sirdars, the Minister and his family, who were the heads of the Parsíwán community of Candahar, were destroyed root and branch, to our deep humiliation and, I will even say, disgrace. It is happy for our national reputation, and for the consciences of our officers, that a more humane and considerate policy now prevails.

On the question of maintaining British officers in the country, which became a rallying cry in the late party contests on the Afghan war, it is remarkable that Yacúb Khan took a diametrically opposite view to that which his father maintained, or at any rate professed to maintain. Shir Ali would have admitted British agents in the

provinces, but interdicted their residence at Cabul, on the score of personal danger. Yacúb Khan, on the contrary, argued, with a far greater show of reason, that at Cabul, where his rule was supreme, he could guarantee the protection of his guests, whereas at a distance there might always be a risk of outrage. Practically, British officers will, I believe, under the new arrangements, associate with the Afghan chiefs very much as Russian officers associate with the Begs of the outlying districts of Kokand and Bokhara, regarded no doubt occasionally as troublesome interlopers, but not exposed to any special danger. British political officers, indeed, in responsible positions and brought into close intercourse with native races, are as a rule soon encircled with a halo of personal affection, which, as far as they are individually concerned, is a better safeguard than sabres and bayonets, and which, moreover, largely adds to the influence and dignity of the Government.

The 6th and 7th Articles of the Treaty of Gandamak, providing for the security and extension of our trade with Afghanistan and the countries beyond, do not seem to have as yet attracted much attention either in England or in India ; but in Russia a cry has already gone up under the soreness of disappointed monopoly which exaggerates the importance of our success, and even places our commercial above our political triumph. The *St. Petersburg Gazette* (No. 140, of June 5, 1879) thus laments over the situation :—

There is now nothing to prevent the English from carrying out their long cherished commercial designs in Central Asia, and in the markets of the western confines of China. It may be presumed that these designs will first exhibit themselves in the form of a railway, northward from Peshawer. But the English will at the same time endeavour to carry another of their contemplated designs into execution. They will try to cut us off from the markets of Western China. For this purpose they will seek first to establish their commercial and then their political influence in Kashgaria. This they attempted to do when Kashgar was governed by Yacúb Beg. . . . If our merchandise is ousted from the markets of Kashgaria, our commerce will suffer in Bokhara and throughout all Turkestan, and we must never forget that trade in Central Asia is the great lever of political influence.

Now, this note of alarm, though premature, is significant, and points to the direction in which, in the true interests of commerce, we should now labour. Whatever may be the import and export duties agreed upon for our direct trade with Afghanistan, care should at any rate be taken in the Commercial Treaty about to be negotiated for the adoption of the lowest possible scale of transit dues, so that, in fair and reasonable competition with Russia, we may throw our Indian produce and home manufactures into Kashgaria through Chitral or Badakhshan, and may receive Chinese commodities in return. The commercial ventures opened with Western China through Thibet and Cashmir have hitherto proved a financial failure, but if the Afghan and Dard tribes are friendly there seems to be no reason whatever why a really profitable trade should not be pushed

along the open Chitrál valley and over the Biroghil Pass to Yarkend and Kashgar, where we certainly ought to be able to compete successfully with the Russian caravans creeping laboriously from the Volga through Tashkend, or from the Caspian by Bokhara and Samarcand.

It will be observed that no notice is taken in the treaty of our relations with any of the independent tribes excepting those connected with the Khyber Pass, notwithstanding that our position at three points above the passes must necessarily bring us in contact with a large mountaineer population, comprising some of the wildest and most unruly clans in the country, such as the Southern Afridís and Urakzyes, the Jájís and Mangals, the Mahsud Vazírís and especially the Tiríns and Kakers. It was probably thought advisable to have our hands as free as possible in dealing with so difficult a question, where the sympathy of the Cabul Court could be of little use to us, and where engagements, indeed, on either side would be not only inoperative but misleading. It is not for a moment to be imagined, as some sanguine cartographers have essayed to prove, that the new frontier is to be aligned on the salient points of the assigned districts. The real red line will probably only be advanced about twenty-four miles up the Khyber Pass from Jamrúd to Lundi-Khana; and even in the assigned districts the limits on all sides will be retrenched as far as is consistent with military exigencies; but still, with every disposition to err on the side of moderation rather than of excess, it is certain that under the Gandamak arrangement our relations with the independent Afghan tribes must be largely developed; and herein lies the danger, or rather the inconvenience, of the new situation. For instance, the Shinwaris, the Tiráís, the Urakzyes and the Mangals must be curbed, and the Mahsud Vazírís, who have never yet been punished for their raid upon Tank and other excesses committed during the war, must sooner or later receive a severe and salutary lesson, while on the other hand a liberal black-mail must be bestowed on the Afridís and Mohmends of the Khyber; and if direct communications, commercial or military, are to be kept up between Pishín and the Indus valley, the Tiríns and Kakers will require to be largely subsidised. Altogether I do not pretend to look on the new frontier arrangements as economical. On the contrary, I shall be surprised if they do not entail an increase of expenditure; but any such expenditure will be more than counterbalanced by the advantages of strengthening our general position and giving consistency to the Afghan alliance.

It only remains to consider the amount of subsidy. Although an outcry was at one time raised against paying a vanquished enemy, it seems on further consideration to be now generally admitted that the money is well laid out, that, in fact, if the conditions of the bargain

are duly observed, the transaction is a very favourable one for India, six lakhs of rupees a year being a very moderate insurance upon our Indian revenues against active annoyance from the intrigues of Russia. If war, indeed, were to supervene in connection with the pending Turcoman Expedition, we should be prepared, no doubt, in our own interests to raise the Afghan subsidy to the amount allotted to former rulers of Cabul, or even to increase it according to the exigencies of our ally's position.

The best practical mode of gauging the value of a treaty, a mode more true and more sound than any criticism however searching and honest, is by observing the effect produced by it on neighbouring States; and if we apply this test in the present instance, the result is in the highest degree satisfactory. Not only, indeed, has the quietising influence of the Gandamak settlement been perceptible at all the native Courts of India—at Gwalior and Indore as well as at Hyderabad and Nepaul—but we are assured that a still more decided effect has been produced in Persia, where the unexpected triumph of our arms, combined with our unexampled moderation as victors, has created quite a revulsion of feeling in our favour; and if any further proof were needed of a belief in the completeness of our success, it might be found not only in the language of the Russian press, which betrays a painful sense of national humiliation, but also in the attitude which the Russian Government has assumed in consequence of the Afghan war, and in the retaliatory efforts which it is now bent on making in order to recover its prestige. 'Your Afghan successes,' said a high Russian functionary at the commencement of the present year, 'will compel us to take Merv, whether we like it or not. We cannot afford to be driven out of Cabul at the mere threat of an English Viceroy. Our Empire is founded on prestige as much as yours, and it becomes therefore a matter of State necessity that we should redress the balance in Central Asia.' In this pregnant sentence—which, however, is false and misleading in so far that it confounds cause with effect, and imputes an aggressive character to what was strictly a measure of defence—we have, I think, a true explanation of the grounds of the great expedition which is now marching to the eastward from the Caspian, an expedition which may lead to consequences of the first political magnitude, and to which accordingly, in continuation of a long series of monitory addresses on the same subject, I now propose to draw particular attention.²

The connection of Russia with the Turcomans is of recent date. It is only, indeed, ten years ago that Russian troops made their descent upon the east shore of the Caspian, establishing in the first

² In addition to the series of essays published in *England and Russia in the East*, 1875, I would refer the reader to two recent papers: 1. 'Russia and the Indian Frontier,' in the *Quarterly Review* for January 1879; and 2. 'The Road to Merv,' *Monthly Record of Royal Geographical Society* for March 1879.

instance two months' possession of the province of Merv, afterwards in due course of the Russian Empire. Up to that period the Turcomans. The Russian Government by any relations with Persia was thus no more than a supposition that the Russian Government any other Christian States. In 1873, some of the Russian hostilities is true, come in the form of Tekehs, who and Tekehs, who Russian hostilities two years later assumed any serious form.

Since 1873 the Akhals and the Akhals and on the pretext of the Russian Government between K... nearest point of settlement; so arms in order to settle their neighbours; and the sympathy of the Russian Government claims that it is throughout the several pleas of the Turcoman Government, and that a different disposition would be twofold. In the consolidation of the Russian Empire, across the Caspian, secondly, it has been accepted by the Russian Government in advance to the Russian Government in regard to European politics, and to record the Russian Government.

The various treaties of the starting-point of 1878 were made in the temper of the Russian Government. Last

instance two military posts—one at Krasnovodsk, near the old embouchure of the Oxus, and the other at Chikishlar, further south—and afterwards in due course inaugurating a Trans-Caspian Government. Up to that period there was no enmity between Russia and the Turcomans. The two nations were not even neighbours, nor bound by any relations, political or commercial, and the Czar's Government was thus no more called on to resent the evil doings of the Tekels—supposing that there were such evil doings—than was Great Britain or any other Christian Power. During the campaign against Khiva in 1873, some of the Turcoman tribes, and notably the Yemúts, did, it is true, come into collision with the Russian columns, but the Akhals and Tekels, who have been since singled out as the special objects of Russian hostility, held aloof on that occasion; and it was not until two years later that the quarrel between Russia and these tribes assumed any serious proportions.

Since 1875, however, Russia has been continually denouncing the Akhals and Tekels and threatening to attack them: sometimes on the pretext that they interrupted the Russian line of communication between Krasnovodsk and Chikishlar, which line, however, at the nearest point is 200 miles distant from the most western Akhal settlements; sometimes she has professed to be obliged to take up arms in order to protect the loyal Yemúts against their truculent neighbours; and sometimes, as in the present instance, she invites the sympathy of Europe in the benevolent motive of her advance, and claims that it is the mission of Russia to suppress the trading in slaves throughout the East. Let it be understood once for all that these several pleas are a mere sham; that the Russian complaints against the Turcomans are, in fact, those of the wolf against the lamb in the fable, and that the real grounds of hostility are to be sought in quite a different direction. Such grounds are not far to seek. They are twofold. In the first place, it is held to be necessary to the consolidation of Russian power in Turkestan that there should be unimpeded lines of communication between the Caspian Sea and the Oxus, across the Steppes inhabited by the Turcoman tribes; and, secondly, it has always been patent to Russia, and has always been accepted by her as a fixed principle of policy, that the nearer she can advance to the Afghan frontier the stronger will be her position in regard to England, and the higher the tone she can assume in European politics. Bearing this explanation in mind, I will now proceed to record her progress.

The various expeditions that were launched into the Steppe from the starting-points of Krasnovodsk and Chikishlar between 1873 and 1878 were mere reconnaissances, undertaken with the view of trying the temper of the tribes and preparing the way for a more serious advance. Last year, for the first time, something more appears to have

been intended than a mere demonstration. The column of 3,000 men, amply provided with carriage and supplies, which left Chikishlar in July 1878 under General Lomakin, had been evidently organised with a view of co-operating with the Turkestan forces then marching under Kaufmann in person against the Afghan frontier. Merv or Herat was probably the ultimate object of the expedition; and if the advance of the main body across the Oxus had been prosecuted, and Persian opposition from the Khorassan border had been neutralised—as it probably would have been under the circumstances—there is no reason why Lomakin should not have fully accomplished his design. By the month of August, however, when the Russian troops had reached the Akhal border, 250 miles from the Caspian, and panic was beginning to spread among the tribes of the Steppe, the 'plan of a Central Asian campaign had collapsed in consequence of the signing of the Treaty of Berlin, and it only remained for Lomakin to withdraw his men from their advanced and unsupported position, an operation which he performed in a masterly manner, and with a loss, as it is stated on the best authority, of 'only two killed and four or five wounded.'

This year's proceedings have been conducted on a scale of far greater magnitude and completeness. Several months have been occupied in preparation. Some of the best officers in the Russian service have been appointed to commands, including Major-General Borch for the infantry and Prince Witgenstein for the cavalry, with Colonel Prozorkevitch in charge of the artillery and Count Malama as head of the staff, the supreme command being at the same time placed in the hands of General Lazareff, a man of no family and not much education, but a thorough soldier and, what is still rarer in the Russian army, a man of unimpeachable character. The infantry force, composed mainly of the twenty-first division, which has been withdrawn for this purpose from the army of the Caucasus, is said to amount to 16,000 men; the cavalry, consisting of two Cossack regiments, a regiment of regular dragoons (whose employment is supposed to indicate the important character of the service), and local levies enlisted for the occasion, numbers about 3,500; while 500 men are estimated as the artillery strength, furnished with thirty-six field guns, the entire force numbering about 20,000 men. This large army, accompanied by 15,000 camels and 6,000 draught horses—intended apparently for a wagon-train, to be now used for the first time in the Steppe—has been assembled on the east coast of the Caspian, and the vanguard, about 3,000 strong, under Prince Dolgorouki, left Chikishlar for the interior on the $\frac{6}{18}$ -th of June.³ The line of route will pro-

³ The magnitude of the army and the elaborate care with which it has been equipped—the numerical force being greater than was thought necessary for the conquest of Khiva—are what have specially drawn attention to General Lazareff's

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bably be the same as that pursued last year by Lomakin, along the Atrek and the Simbar to Khoja-Kalasi and Bend-i-Hassan on the northern face of the Kuran-Dágh range; and as far as this point—about 250 miles from the Caspian—where the Akhal settlements commence, no serious opposition is to be expected. Beyond, it is not easy at present to forecast the progress of events. The Akhals, who are still much elated at Lomakin's supposed failure of last year, talk of a resolute resistance and threaten to dispute every inch of ground between Kizil-Arvat and Deregez; but those who know them best are very sceptical of any such heroic efforts. Unless openly supported by the chiefs of the Khorassán border, with the sanction of Persia, the Akhals will, in all probability, melt away before the Russian arms, as on so many previous occasions have the Uzbeks, Kirghiz, and other kindred nations. The faint-hearted will come in and sue for terms; the bolder spirits will fall back as the Russians advance, leaving their forts and camps to the mercy of the victor, and finally taking refuge with their brethren the Tekehs of Merv. And now to consider the question of supplies from Persia, on which the success or failure of the Russian expedition has been supposed to mainly depend—immense efforts have been evidently made to render the force independent of Persian aid. Provision caravans in large numbers will follow in rear of the columns, and as the recent harvest has been prolific, a certain amount of grain will thus, no doubt, be found in the abandoned 'Obahs' of the Akhals, which extend in an unbroken series for nearly 200 miles along the northern slopes of the Kuran-Dágh range; but the main question, or what is supposed to be the main question, relates to the readiness or not of Persia to furnish further supplies from the frontier districts of Khorassán. Now, putting aside for the moment all question of the struggle between England and Russia for political influence at the Court of Teheran, it cannot be doubted that Persia, looking merely to her own interests, must regard the intrusion

expedition. But it should be remembered that the circumstances of the present war are very different from the campaign of 1873. On that occasion the lines of march from the respective bases of Kinderlinsk Bay, of Orenburg, and of Tashkend, conducted through friendly or at any rate neutral districts to the point of attack—the Kirghiz of the Ust-Urt or Kara-kalpacks of the Kizil-kum being of no military account—so that there was no frittering away of strength by detaching troops *en route*; whereas on the present expedition the entire route for 450 miles, from the Caspian to the neighbourhood of Merv, lies through an enemy's country, where precautions on a large and efficient scale will be necessary for the protection of convoys and the maintenance of communication with the base. It is probable, indeed, that more than one-half of General Lazareff's large force will be thus employed on escort or patrol duty, or in garrisoning a line of posts in rear of the advancing column—at Chat, at Kizil-Arvat, at Geuk-tepeh, and at Ashkabad—so that 5,000 or 6,000 fighting men will be alone available for active operations to the east of the Akhal settlements, a force that would be hardly strong enough to attack the Tekch position at Merv, and still less to undertake a siege of Herat.

of the Russian arms along her north-eastern frontier with profound suspicion and dislike. Knowing, as the Persians do, the omnivorous capacity of the great Northern Octopus, it cannot be agreeable to them to find a monster sucker enveloping the frontier of Khorassan from Asterabad to Serakhs; besides, the Shah has claims, of long standing and fairly supported, on the allegiance both of the Akhals and of the Tekehs, and if the Russian expedition succeed, such claims are at once wiped out for ever. It is clear, then, that whatever may be his Majesty's personal leaning to his Russian friends, he cannot possibly look on Lazareff's advance with favour; but to adopt measures to thwart it would be a very serious affair indeed, and might provoke consequences which, without a direct pledge of support from England, he could not in common prudence encounter. As far as the matter of supplies is concerned no great difficulty will probably occur. Russia could hardly demand substantive aid from Persia in an expedition which not only threatens the Shah's territorial rights, but is undertaken almost without disguise in a spirit of hostility to England. Active assistance from Persia in furnishing supplies may thus be left out of the account; but, on the other hand, withholding supplies by coercive measures might furnish Russia with legitimate ground of complaint. To establish, indeed, a cordon along the frontier so as to prevent the inhabitants of Bujnoord, Kúchán, and Deregez from selling the produce of their fields to the Russian commissariat officers in their immediate neighbourhood—even if practicable, which may be doubted—would be a measure of a decidedly unfriendly character, and might provoke reprisals. On the supply question, then, it may be assumed that for the present Persia will observe a strict neutrality. But there is beyond the supply question a question of right of territory, which is of far more importance, and on which neutrality is impossible. If the Russian columns pursue their march to the eastward beyond the Akhal settlements, in the direction either of Merv or Serakhs, they immediately enter on *bonâ fide* Persian territory. Deregez, Abiverd, Chardeh, and Mehna, which the Russian officers complacently speak of as their contemplated basis of operations against Merv, are as much a part of Persia as is Asterabad or Teheran; and there is no possibility of passing to the eastward of the Akhal country except along this line, for the desert to the north is a waterless waste. It may be presumed that if General Lazareff is ordered to attack Merv he will, on his military responsibility, establish himself at such points as are most convenient for his enterprise, without concerning himself with the question whether he is or is not encamped on Persian territory; but it is clear that such a violation of territory would form a legitimate *casus belli* for Persia, and that, if she did not resent this invasion of her rights, we might very properly regard her as a consenting party to our injury and act accordingly.

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Until we are directly assured of Russia's hostile intentions, it would of course be premature to suggest even such an extreme measure as a defensive alliance with Persia, which would have so many serious inconveniences; but it is quite on the cards that, as events become developed, that may be the least hazardous course to pursue. If Russia, as there is strong reason to believe, is now pushing on to Merv or Serakhs, not so much for the punishment of the slave-dealing Tekehs—though that of course is blazoned to the world as the righteous object in view—as for the purpose of exerting a pressure on Afghanistan, and with the ultimate hope of occupying Herat, then it might very possibly be a sound policy to extend to Persia the provisions of the Asia Minor Protectorate, or even to support her actively in vindicating her rights upon the frontier of Khorassán. It is the universal belief in the Russian army that Herat is the real object of the present expedition, Turcoman punishment being a mere by-game, or at most a means to an end; and it has even been suggested that an attempt will be made to secure the complicity both of Persia and of Ayúb Khan in thus dealing a heavy blow at the integrity of Afghanistan. I do not myself anticipate any such extreme and unjustifiable measure, but I do see that in the present unsettled state of public feeling at Cabul, and before the Afghans have had time to realise the benefits of the English alliance, if a strong Russian force be allowed to establish itself within hail of the Herat frontier, very serious troubles are likely to ensue, troubles not less pernicious in their character or less serious in their effect than those which threatened to arise from Stolitoff's establishment at Cabul. The *animus* of Russia in undertaking the enormous expense (calculated at above a million sterling) and the heavy risk of sending a force of 20,000 men to the Oxus, is unmistakable. She is intensely jealous of our Afghan triumph, and believes that her own prestige and power are jeopardised by our success. She seems, indeed, to think that a campaign similar in character and *éclat* to the conquest of Khiva—even though it be similarly barren of substantive results—is indispensable to retrieve her position as the mistress of the destinies of Central Asia; and, holding further that that position is incompatible with our supremacy in the countries adjoining her southern frontier, she may feel herself bound to put in action against us that same machinery of intrigue and agitation which she directed against Turkey with so much success in the recent instances of Servia and Bulgaria. Unfortunately, too, there are instruments suited to her purpose available at every turn. A jealousy of race has already enabled her to initiate revolt upon the upper Oxus, and it is now understood that under her auspices a confederacy of Tajik chiefs—composed of Abdul Fyz Khan of Darwaz, Yussuf Ali Shah of Shignán, together with Mir Babu Khan and the other recalcitrant nobles of

Badakhshán and Vakhán—has been organised, which may, for a time at any rate, very seriously cripple the Afghan power to the north of the Hindú-kush. Abdur-Rahman Khan, again, that storm-bird of Afghan diplomacy, is still held in reserve at Samarcand, ready to swoop on Turkeistán whenever his Russian friends may give the signal; and a new aspirant for power, Iskender Khan, who represents the Herat branch of the Baruckzye governing family—being the eldest surviving son of the well-known Sultan Ahmed Khan—and who served for some years with distinction in the Russian army, has now appeared upon the scene, having been placed by the Persian Government in a military command upon the frontier, where he may prove a troublesome neighbour to Yacúb Khan and his officers. With the evidence before us of these elements of mischief available for the disturbance of the Afghan settlement, and with the knowledge that any such disturbance must react upon our immediate frontier, we cannot too closely watch the progress of Lazareff's columns to the eastward. It is true that the Russian Government has formally disavowed the intention of attempting the present conquest of Merv; but this disavowal goes a very little way in reassuring us as to the harmlessness of the pending expedition. If Herat be the destination of the troops, Merv is entirely off the line of march, and would only be attacked in case of serious molestation from the Tekehs; but in all probability neither Herat nor Merv is immediately threatened. There are many indications to show that the point at which the campaign of the present year will be brought to a close will be either Deregez or Abiverd, where the Akhal settlements terminate, and before the Tekeh country is entered. This would be a very convenient centre from which to conduct negotiations with Merv upon one side, and with the Khorassán Government upon the other, while from the same point communications might also be opened up with Khiva across the desert, and a direct pressure might further be exerted on Herat and the tribes in the neighbourhood.

And under such circumstances—that is, supposing a large Russian force to be encamped at Abiverd (which is naturally the most fertile district of the 'Attock,' though ruined at present and almost uninhabited, owing to the depredations of the Tekehs), and supposing that this force, which would immediately threaten Merv, were in uninterrupted communication on one side with its base upon the Caspian, and on the other with the Russian settlements on the Oxus—what would be the proper policy for the British Government to pursue? It may be presumed that Russia could not have attained such a position without having encountered energetic protests both from England and Persia from England, because we have already placed on record the strongest remonstrances against a Russian occupation of Merv, and, as far as Indian interests are concerned, all the arguments against the conque

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may, for a time, of Merv by a foreign Power apply in a still stronger degree to Abiverd ; to the north of Persia, for two reasons : first, because the Shah has always asserted, and sometimes realised, a territorial right to the Merv district—a Persian army, indeed, having captured the city and surrounding country and ready to in 1860, though subsequently compelled, through military misconduct, to retire ; and secondly, because Abiverd is an undisputed dependency of Kelat-i-Nadir, and its invasion by Russia must be held to constitute a gross violation of territory. But would such a violation be declared a *casus belli* by the Shah, and would Great Britain be prepared to take up arms in support of her Persian ally? These are grave questions, which I do not venture to answer. The interests concerned are no doubt of the largest character. Russia has already made, and is still making, the most strenuous efforts to draw Persia to her side, either by fair means or foul. A venal Court has been for the most part secured in her interest ; her officers are gaining influence and authority with the regular Persian army ; the Shah's personal feelings have been powerfully wrought upon ; it is now probable that pressure, and a pressure of the most urgent and persistent kind, will be applied. Unaided, it seems to me that Persia must inevitably yield ; but if she does yield, what is it we have to expect? An argument has been brought forward in influential quarters, that the Afghan settlement must be held to have dissipated all danger ; that alarms at the advance of Russia are now vain alarms ; that even if Merv were taken, and Russia and Persia combined threatened the Afghan border, the British-Indian Government, secure in Yacub Khan's fidelity, and in his maintenance of the frontier fortresses, of Herat and Mymeneh especially, might laugh at the machinations of its enemies and defy their efforts to annoy us. There is much of fallacy, I believe, in this argument. The Afghan settlement is a very good settlement as far as it goes, but it is not immaculate—it is not complete. To yield to us its full measure of defence, the treaty must be supplemented by all legitimate precautions and supports. Persia must be detached from Russia *coûte que coûte*. Russia herself must not be left in any uncertainty as to our intentions. She must be made to understand, while there is yet time for her to modify her aggressive preparations, that she will not be permitted unopposed to establish herself in strength upon the Afghan frontier, either at Merv, or at Serakhs, or even at Abiverd, nor to recommence intrigues against the British power in India. She might, indeed, be warned that, if necessary, we were prepared in self-defence to support the Turcomans—with whom she has no legitimate quarrel—with arms and money, or even to turn the tables on her by encouraging the efforts of the Uzbeks to recover their liberty. Above all, at the present time, we must show ourselves strong upon the threatened frontier, and equal to any emergency. It would be almost fatuity at such a moment to withdraw our garrison from Candahar. Yacub

Khan must be made to see that it is as much for his interest as our own to hold an efficient body of British troops in such a position that, on the approach of danger, and without any semblance or suspicion of interference with Afghan rights, they might, with military alacrity, occupy Herat as an auxiliary garrison.

I cannot doubt that we are fully able to hold our own in the East, as well as in the West. All that is required is that we should assume the firm attitude and the bold language of conscious strength and of conscious right.

H. C. RAWLINSON.