

1878

## The Afghan question: speech of the Earl of Northbrook, in the Guildhall, Winchester, on the 11th of November 1878 (1878?)

Thomas George Baring Northbrook

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*Edmund*

# THE AFGHAN QUESTION.

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S P E E C H

OF

THE EARL OF NORTHBROOK,

IN THE

GUILDHALL, WINCHESTER,

*On the 11th of November, 1878.*

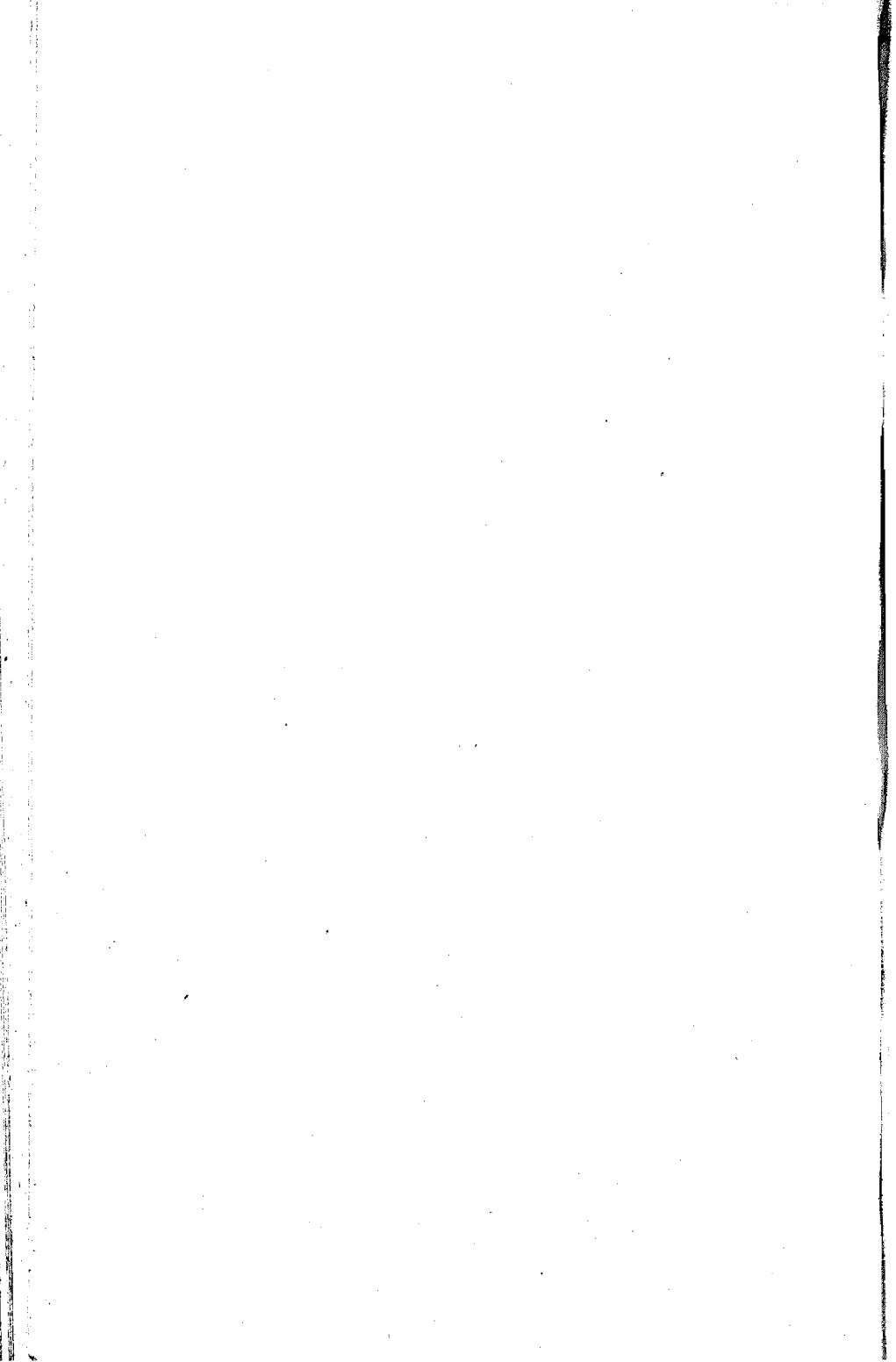
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## SPEECH OF THE EARL OF NORTHBROOK AT THE GUILDHALL, WINCHESTER,

*On the 11th of November, 1878.*

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The HIGH SHERIFF gave "The Houses of Parliament."

LORD NORTHBROOK, in responding to the toast, said:—  
Mr. Mayor, Mr. High Sheriff, and gentlemen,—I beg to thank you on behalf of the House of Lords for the manner in which you have received the toast which has just been proposed. Although the duties of the House of Lords are not so laborious as those of the other House of Parliament, yet I venture to think that in discussions of great public questions the House of Lords has shewn itself equal to the occasion, and has not disappointed public expectation.

On such occasions as these, members of Parliament are usually expected to perform the difficult task of saying something upon public affairs without touching upon party politics. I trust, however, that I shall be able to do this, and for this reason. The only public affairs of which I have any special knowledge, and the only public affairs upon which I am able to give you any information, are those connected with India. When in the course of the last two years I have attended in this room, to join in doing honour to gentlemen who have filled the office of Chief Magistrate of the City of Winchester—and I have never attended with greater pleasure than on the present occasion—I have offered some observations upon Indian affairs. I have been told, even by those who do not agree with me as to home politics, that those observations of mine were of some interest. That being so, and having regard to existing circumstances, I propose to make some remarks on the same subject this evening; and in doing so, I beg

to say that I for one have never regarded Indian questions as party questions in Parliament or elsewhere. The other day I was asked to take the chair of a political meeting called to consider the present state of affairs in India, but I declined to do so. You may rest assured, therefore, Mr. Mayor and gentlemen, that, while I gladly avail myself of this opportunity of expressing my opinion with regard to the difficulty which has arisen with Afghanistan at a meeting which has no party character, I shall be most cautious not to say anything which could interfere with the harmony of the evening.

Probably the best thing I can do, in order to render clear what I have to say to you, will be to give a brief sketch of the history of our relations with Afghanistan, with which country, I am sorry to say, we appear to be on the verge of war.

It is needless to recall to your recollection that nearly forty years ago an unreasonable fear of Russian intrigues in Afghanistan led us into an unjust war with that country; and that, after grave disasters, the gallantry of our army and the determination of our generals placed British troops as conquerors in Cabul. In the year 1842, having done this, we retired to India. At that time the ruler of Cabul was Dost Mohammed. It was not long before we became good friends with the gallant enemy with whom we had fought. That friendship was mainly due to Sir John (now Lord) Lawrence, who signed a treaty with Dost Mohammed and his heirs, in which we agreed to respect his territories and never to interfere therein, while he entered into a corresponding engagement with respect to British territories. This Treaty, which still subsists, was concluded in the year 1855. We afterwards, during the Persian war, gave him an annual subsidy, and the result of this policy was that during the Indian Mutiny Dost Mohammed remained firm to his alliance, and did not disturb the tranquillity of our frontier. Dost Mohammed died in 1863, and for five years there were civil wars between his sons, who contended for the sovereignty of Afghanistan. During almost all that time Sir John Lawrence, who had made the treaty with Dost Mohammed, was Governor-General of India. He wisely abstained from any interference in the civil wars of Afghanistan, only saying that whoever became ruler of the country would be recognised as such by the British Government. Mr. Mayor, we have heard a good deal lately of the phrase "masterly inactivity." It may be interesting to you to know what the origin of that phrase was. It originated in

an article written in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1869, by a very able young Indian civilian, John Wyllie, who, I regret to say, shortly afterwards died. Describing the policy of Sir John Lawrence, he said that during the civil war, Sir John Lawrence pursued a policy of "masterly inactivity." The phrase, however, in no way applied to the policy pursued since the year 1868. So much does it not apply that Mr. Wyllie, who wrote the article headed "Masterly Inactivity," wrote another headed "Mischievous Inactivity," in which he gave the reasons he had to advance against the policy afterwards pursued by Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo.

To return to our history, Shere Ali, the present Ameer of Afghanistan, at length, in the year 1868, got the upper-hand of his brothers, and then it appeared to Lord Lawrence, and, I think, wisely, that the time had arrived when the British Government might enter into closer relations with him and support him in maintaining himself in the kingdom. That happened under a Conservative Government, when Mr. Disraeli was Prime Minister, and Sir Stafford Northcote was Secretary of State for India. It fell, however, to Lord Mayo to carry out the policy of Lord Lawrence. Lord Mayo met Shere Ali at Umballa in the Punjab, in the spring of 1869, and held a conference with him, surrounded by all the pomp which attends such viceregal assemblages; and after hearing all that Shere Ali desired to receive from the British Government, he decided what he would give him, and what he did not feel it right for the interests of this country to give him. SDM.

As the policy of Lord Mayo has been challenged a good deal in the Press of late, I think it only fair to him to use his own words to describe it. These are his words. He wrote on the 1st of July, 1869:—"While we distinctly intimated to the Ameer that under no circumstances should a British soldier ever cross his frontier to assist him in coercing his rebellious subjects; that no European officers should be placed as Residents in his cities; that no fixed subsidy or money allowance should be given for any named period; that no promises of assistance in other ways would be made; that no treaty would be entered into obliging us under every circumstance to recognise him and his descendants Rulers in Afghanistan; we were prepared, by the most open and absolute present recognition, and by every public evidence of friendly disposition, of respect for his character and interest in his fortunes, to give all the moral support in our power; and in addition we were willing to assist him with money,

arms, ammunition, and Native artificers, and in other ways whenever we deem it possible or desirable to do so."

There are three things in that statement which require notice. First of all, Lord Mayo distinctly told the Ameer that no European officer would be placed in his territories against his wish. That appears, at first sight, a great concession to the Ameer of Afghanistan; but it happens that Dost Mohammed, the father of Shere Ali, had the strongest conviction of the objections against placing British officers in his country. He said to Lord Lawrence in 1856, "If we are to be friends, do not force British officers upon me." Doubtless this was one of the reasons why Lord Mayo gave this assurance to the present Ameer. It is obvious, moreover, that unless British officers were to be there on good relations with the Ruler of Afghanistan, they would be of no use whatever. The Ameer, however, has, until quite recently, always had a Native British Agent at his Court. The next point is that there were to be no treaties with Shere Ali. The treaties of which he would have been glad were of two kinds—first, an unconditional guarantee that we should defend him from attack from without. Lord Mayo very properly refused to give such a guarantee; the effect of it would have been to encourage Shere Ali to attack his neighbours, relying on our support, and to run great risk of bringing us into collision with them. Again, Lord Mayo refused to give a guarantee that England would support any one whom Shere Ali at his death might name as his heir. Dost Mohammed advised, and indeed entreated Lord Lawrence, in 1857, "to leave the Afghans alone to settle their own disputes, to fight their own battles among themselves," and such a guarantee would probably involve us in an Afghan civil war, on Shere Ali's death. Those were the principles upon which Lord Mayo dealt with Shere Ali in 1869.

The arrangements made with Shere Ali, though they were made under a Liberal Administration, were initiated under a Conservative Administration, and received the emphatic approval of Sir Stafford Northcote, who was Secretary of State for India when they were commenced. This shews, as I have said, that this is no party matter, for the policy pursued was one that was carried on from Government to Government, and from Viceroy to Viceroy.

I succeeded Lord Mayo in 1872 as Governor-General of India, but I am not going to dwell on my own conduct during the time I occupied that position. I had the honour to serve under the Administrations of Mr.

Gladstone and of Lord Beaconsfield. The despatches that were written during my term of office have not been presented to Parliament, and therefore it would be obviously wrong in me to indulge in any disquisitions upon my own conduct. I may say this, however, that I endeavoured to the best of my ability to carry out the policy of Lord Mayo and Lord Lawrence, not only because I thought it right to carry out faithfully the engagements of my predecessors, but because I entirely concurred in the policy they had adopted, and the reasons upon which that policy was founded. On one matter I may say a word without any indiscretion, and that is the reception of British officers in Afghanistan. I saw the Prime Minister of Shere Ali in 1873, and feeling that occasion might arise when it would be of great advantage that English officers might be sent into Afghanistan, particularly as there was some information about the frontier which we desired to obtain in the interests of Afghanistan, I desired the Foreign Secretary of the Government to consult with the Prime Minister, and ascertain whether Shere Ali would be likely to receive English officers if he were asked to do so, and a confidential communication took place accordingly. Shere Ali's Prime Minister of that time is now dead, therefore I see no impropriety in making known his opinions. This, then, was the opinion of the Ameer of Cabul's Prime Minister in 1873, in reference to the stationing of British officers in Afghanistan:—Speaking as a friend and in the interests of the British Government, he could not recommend a specific request being made to station British officers in certain places. Such a demand, however friendly the Ameer might be to the British Government, "would give rise to distrust and misapprehension." The reasons he gave were that the Afghans were deplorably ignorant, and entertained an idea that a deputation of British Agents is always a precursor to annexation—I confess, Mr. Mayor, that this suspicion was not altogether without foundation. He also said that there was a strong party in Cabul opposed to the Ameer entering into intimate relations with the British Government. Soon after that conversation the question whether Sir Douglas Forsyth should return to India from Kashgar through Afghanistan was raised, and the Ameer, after some hesitation, declined to receive him, giving as a reason that, shortly before, a British officer, Major Macdonald, had been shot on the frontier, and that he could not be answerable for the safety of English officers in Afghanistan. I felt I had no right, under the circumstances, and after the assurances which had been given by Lord Mayo that British



officers should not be sent into Afghanistan against the wishes of the Ameer, to consider that any offence had been committed against the British Government by the refusal.

Since 1876, when I returned to England, I have had no official knowledge of what has taken place in India. Last year, I said, speaking in this hall, that I felt considerable apprehensions with regard to our policy in relation to Afghanistan, but I also stated that those apprehensions were to a great extent removed by the assurances given in Parliament in 1877 by Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote. Nevertheless, I am bound to say that my apprehensions still exist that there has been a change of policy since the year 1876. I know that negotiations with the Ameer took place early in 1877, and that the Native Agent of the British Government was afterwards withdrawn from the Court of the Ameer. There are other circumstances which seem to me, in default of further information, not to be altogether consistent with the assurances given to Parliament in 1877. This, however, is a question which cannot be discussed here, nor until the whole information on this subject is given to Parliament.

Such, then, was the state of affairs when the present difficulty with Afghanistan arose. I need not dwell at length on the circumstances which led to the critical state of affairs which now exists. On the 13th of August we heard that a Russian Mission had arrived at Cabul on the 22nd of July preceding, and that the Government had determined, in consequence, to send a British Mission to the Ameer. The Viceroy addressed letters to the Ameer, which arrived at Cabul on the 10th of September, requesting him to receive the British Mission. The Mission, however, was sent forward before the Ameer's answer was received. On the 21st of September, the officers of the Ameer in the Khyber Pass refused to allow the Mission to proceed. It was said in the first telegraphic accounts that a gross insult had been offered to the British officer who went up the Khyber in advance of the Mission. But I am glad that subsequent accounts have disabused us of any such idea, and that the conduct of the officer of the Ameer in the Khyber was perfectly civil. He simply said that he had no orders to allow the Mission to pass, and asked that it should wait until he should receive instructions from his master. The Mission was then broken up, and a British force was massed upon the frontiers of Afghanistan. The native Envoy who was sent with the Viceroy's letters, returned with the Ameer's reply to Simla on the 26th of October. It seemed to the Government to be right under the circumstances that an

ultimatum should be addressed to the Ameer; it was delivered on the 2nd of November into his officer's hands on the frontier, and we are informed that if he rejects the ultimatum, hostilities will commence on the 20th of the present month.

Many people have asked me what I think upon the matter—whether I think we ought to go to war or not, and whether I think we have a just cause of war or not. All that I can say now is that it is utterly impossible for me to give any answer to these questions, because I do not know what instructions were given to the Mission, I do not know what answer Shere Ali has given to the Viceroy, and I do not know the terms of the ultimatum. Under these circumstances I can give no opinion whether the cause of war, if we have a war, is a just one, or whether we ought or ought not to go to war.

But, although I can give no such opinion for want of sufficient information, there are some questions connected with what has occurred upon which I may say a few words. And first upon the conduct of Russia in this matter. I am perfectly aware of what has taken place between the Russian Government and the British Government with regard to Afghanistan up to the year 1874. There is no secret about it; the papers have been laid before Parliament. What has happened is this—the Russian Government agreed with us as to the frontier of Afghanistan. They agreed with us that they would use what influence they could with the Native States on their side of the frontier to hinder those States from attacking Afghanistan, and we agreed to use our influence to prevent Afghanistan from attacking the Native States on the Russian side of the frontier. The Russian Government did one thing more. On several occasions, in the clearest possible terms, they told us that Afghanistan was beyond the sphere of their proceedings in Central Asia. I am bound to say that up to the time when I left India, they, to the best of my belief, had adhered to their engagements. At that time one of the disappointed members of the family of Dost Mohammed lived in a city under Russian protection. That man was never allowed to give any trouble in Afghanistan. On other occasions the Russian Government shewed that they in no way desired to depart from their engagements in the matter.

It would appear, however, at first sight that by sending a Mission to Cabul, they had distinctly broken the engagements they had made; but we must be fair in the matter, and we must recollect that in the spring

of the year we were on the brink of a war with Russia. It was supposed that Russia would not submit the terms of the San Stefano Treaty to the discussion of the European Powers concerned. We all know that the British Government took a decided line against Russia assuming such an attitude. We sent Native Indian troops to Malta, and, in point of fact, the question of peace or war hung at that time on a thread. For my own part I do not hesitate to say that if we had the right—as I hold that we had the right—to send Native Indian troops to Malta, and to take other measures to prepare for a war with Russia, the Russians had the right to take such steps as they thought necessary to protect Russian interests in Asia. This is the explanation I give, and which I conceive to be the natural explanation, of the movement of troops in the spring of this year from Russian Turkestan towards the Oxus, and the sending of the Russian Mission to Afghanistan.

I have seen it mentioned in the newspapers that this Mission was sent after the signature of the Treaty of Berlin on the 13th of July, and that this is a proof of the animosity of the Russian Government towards us. That statement can, at any rate, be easily disposed of. The Russian Mission arrived at Cabul on the 22nd of July. The distance from Samarcand to Cabul being more than six hundred miles, it could not have been possible for the Russian Mission to accomplish it in much less than a month. It is therefore impossible that a Mission starting on the 13th of July could have arrived at Cabul on the 22nd of July.

It seems to me, with regard to the conduct of Russia in this matter, that the Government of this country had a right, peace being assured, to enter into a diplomatic correspondence with Russia for the purpose of asking what were her intentions, and whether she would adhere to the former arrangement with respect to abstention from interference with Afghanistan, or what her future policy was to be. This the Government had a perfect right to do, and my own impression is that that is the course which the Government has pursued. We do not know at present what has been done; papers were promised the day before Parliament separated, and I presume that those papers will soon be produced.

So far, then, as to the conduct of Russia. Now as regards that of the Ameer of Afghanistan. Supposing that Shere Ali had, when I was Governor-General of India, received a Russian Mission at Cabul without first consulting the British

Government as to whether it should be received, I should have said that it would have been an unfriendly act, in consequence of our previous communications with him. But we must look at the circumstances which went before the case as it has actually arisen. It was impossible for the Ameer to communicate with the British Government, for, rightly or wrongly, our Native Agent at his Court had been withdrawn. We know, however, that he tried to prevent the Russian Mission going to Cabul. That has appeared several times in the correspondence from India, and I believe it to be the fact. We cannot possibly have any evidence that the Ameer has entered into any hostile arrangement with the Russian Mission. I have no fear of Russian intrigue in Afghanistan. From all that I know or have ever heard of that country the real feeling of the Ameer of Cabul and of the people of Afghanistan is a desire to maintain their independence, and a dislike of any interference, either by England or Russia, in their affairs; and I will say this much, that, to the best of my belief, when I left India, the Ameer, though he would have disliked any interference on the part of England, would have resented any such interference on the part of Russia to a far greater extent. In my opinion the presence of Russians in Afghanistan would only arouse the feeling of independence there, and the longer they remained the less influence they would have.

But when we consider the conduct of Shere Ali in this matter I confess that I have observed with the greatest regret opinions which have been expressed in the Press with regard to the manner in which we should treat him, because due consideration has not been given to his position and his rights; and what I regret more is that Sir Fitzjames Stephen,\*

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\*The opinions of Sir Fitzjames Stephen to which I referred will be found in his letter to the *Times* of the 24th of October. On the 9th of November he addressed another letter to the *Times*, more fully explaining the meaning of his first letter. I regret that his second letter was not published until after I spoke, and that I was therefore unable to notice it together with his original letter.

Sir Fitzjames Stephen has since published a letter in the *Times*, commenting upon my observations with respect to his first letter. There are some trifling inaccuracies in the passages quoted by Sir Fitzjames Stephen, who had only access to the telegraphic report of my speech; these I have now corrected.

Whatever my opinion may be of the arguments which Sir Fitzjames Stephen has used in his two last letters, I have great pleasure in taking this opportunity of expressing my cordial concurrence with the conclusion of his last letter, in which he writes, quoting from a speech made by him when in India, "the real foundation of our power will be found to be an inflexible adherence to the broad

a highly distinguished Liberal lawyer, has laid down doctrines on this subject in which I can in no way agree. Sir Fitzjames Stephen has contended that the principles of international law have no reference to our dealings with Shere Ali. He says that "there is no law by which the case between Shere Ali and ourselves can be tried. We are exceedingly powerful and highly civilised; he is comparatively weak and half barbarous. He cannot be permitted to follow a course of policy which may expose us to danger. We are to be the judges of the cause, and we are to decide according to our own interests." I have given you Sir Fitzjames Stephen's own words, as I do not wish to misrepresent him. Where does the doctrine he lays down carry us? It goes this length, that any nation, any civilised nation it must be, in dealing with another weak nation, and one which the strong nation conceives to be uncivilised, may act on no other principle than that might is right. This principle would justify the partition of Poland, and would justify every act of Russia against which this country has been crying out for some time. I feel sure that Sir Fitzjames Stephen could not have sufficiently considered the meaning of what he has said, and that such a doctrine as this must shock the moral sense of all right feeling people of this country.

But I am satisfied that the doctrine itself is fundamentally unsound. Sir Fitzjames Stephen seems to me to have confused the conventional law of nations—that is to say, that part of the law of nations which depends on the practice of European States, and which is not applicable in all respects to Asiatic States,—with the main principles of international law by which great questions such as whether a war is justifiable or not are to be tried. These main principles of international law are founded upon the first principles of morals, and are derived from what Bacon calls the "fountains of justice," which have been recognised not only by Christian lawyers and statesmen, but by heathen lawyers and statesmen from times long past. Some present may remember an eloquent passage

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principles of justice, common to all persons, in all countries and all ages, and enforced with unflinching firmness for or against everyone who claims their benefits or who presumes to violate them, no matter who he may be." These words express, he says, his most earnest and abiding convictions about India. They apply, in his opinion as well as in mine, to Native States in and adjoining to India just as much as to individuals. "If possible," he adds, "their application to such States is even more important than their application to individuals."

of Cicero on the subject which I may be allowed to paraphrase thus:—These foundations of law are confined to no time and to no place. They cannot be abrogated by Act of Parliament or by the popular opinion of the day. They were as binding on Rome as they are now on England, and they are of as equal force at Cabul as they were at Berlin.

This new doctrine, moreover, is as impolitic as it is unsound. "Justice," says Sir James Macintosh, "is the paramount interest of all men and of all communities;" and such doctrines as those propounded by Sir Fitzjames Stephen are not only dangerous anywhere, but especially so in India. We have to deal in India with Native States which, although independent, are undoubtedly weak, and some of them not highly civilised. We have also to deal with Native States which are not altogether independent, but which possess limited sovereign rights—limited by treaty engagements with this country and by usages which have descended from the time when the Emperors of Delhi held sway in Hindostan. To all these States the Queen's Proclamation on assuming direct sovereignty in India was issued, on November 1st, 1858. I remember well having been magnificently entertained in this hall, Mr. Mayor, before I left England for India, by one of your predecessors—I wish he were among us now—and having surprised some of my friends by reading a large portion of that Proclamation. Let me read again a few words from it. Her Majesty said:—"We hereby announce to the Native Princes of India that all the treaties and engagements made with them, by or under the authority of the East India Company, are by Us accepted and will be scrupulously maintained, and We look for the like observance on their part. We desire no extension of Our present territorial possessions, and while We will permit no aggression upon Our dominions or Our rights to be attempted with impunity, We shall sanction no encroachments of those of others. We shall respect the rights, dignity, and honour of Native Princes as Our own." If we are to substitute the doctrines which I have endeavoured to combat for the great principles of justice in our dealings with Native States, we shall cast all our treaties to the winds, and discontent and suspicion will soon take the place of loyalty and confidence in the hearts of the Native Princes of India. As one who has held one of the highest offices under the Crown in one of the most splendid possessions of the Crown, I am bound to protest against any such doctrines as these, and I am certain that if ever they

should be propounded in Parliament they will be met with an indignant repudiation by Her Majesty's Ministers.

There is one other matter of some importance upon which I should like to say a few words. Nobody could have been more pleased than I was to read that Lord Beaconsfield, in his speech on Saturday at the Mansion House, declared that he did not believe in the danger of a Russian invasion of India. He alluded, however, to the necessity of some rectification of our North-Western frontier. The particular rectification which Her Majesty's Ministers consider to be necessary was not specified; and, therefore, I think that I can without any impropriety contribute something to the information which is now before the public on this question, which I am sure cannot be construed to be one which touches upon party politics. The rectification of the North-Western frontier of India may possibly, and, indeed, not improbably, be confined to the permanent occupation of Quetta, a post in the territory of the Khan of Khelat, on the other side of the Bolan Pass from India. Upon this I wish to say that the responsibility of the measures taken in the year 1876 for the settlement of some difficulties which had arisen between the Khan of Khelat and his nobles rests upon me. It is fair to say that I did not contemplate in that arrangement the occupation of Quetta, and, indeed, I expressed my opinion in the House of Lords last year against that measure. However, the occupation of Quetta has taken place. The political importance of the situation is undoubted. The tribes in the neighbourhood are not unfriendly to us, and reasons may now exist for a permanent occupation of the post.

But other suggestions have been made for the rectification of the North-Western frontier with which I entirely disagree. Sir Henry Havelock, an officer of distinguished service himself, bearing a still more distinguished name, and also a Liberal member of Parliament, has recommended that we should abandon our present position at Peshawur, and advance to the other side of the Khyber Pass. I have seen other recommendations in the Press that we should take up a position still further in advance, that we should dominate the range of mountains which is called the Hindoo Koosh; and it is said that high military authorities consider our position as not safe until we can command the other side of our present mountain frontier. I believe that in making these suggestions the size of the country concerned, and the nature of its people, have been lost sight of. Any one who has looked at a map with regard

not only to the distances, but to the mountain ranges of Afghanistan, a country far larger than Switzerland, would see that if this military opinion be a sound one, we cannot stop until our outposts are on the other side of the Hindoo Koosh, and until the whole of Afghanistan is within our military control. In my opinion our present frontier is unassailable for purposes of defence, and to advance into Afghanistan would be most unwise. The great difficulty which we have hitherto had with respect to our frontier is in dealing with the independent tribes adjoining it. If we advance further we shall have to deal with other tribes, and we shall have the same difficulty occurring over again. The clearest notion that I can give of the difficulty that we shall have is the trouble that we have already experienced in securing our communication between Peshawur and Kohat, a very short distance, through the territory of one only of these tribes. Just as I left India this tribe was requested to improve the communication, and the result was that they resisted, and in the end it required an expedition of some 8,000 men; and although the expedition was admirably conducted, it took more than a year to bring this small tribe to submission.

The Prime Minister said the other night that "the attention of Viceroy and of Governments in India and in England has for a long time been directed to the question of the North-Western frontier of our Indian empire." It was not, however, considered in my time. My military advisers—Lord Napier of Magdala, and Sir Henry Norman, second to none in knowledge and experience—never brought to the notice of the Government of India that our frontier required rectification, during the four years I passed in India. I have the highest authority for saying that during the Administration of Lord Mayo no such considerations were brought forward; but in the years 1867 and 1868, under Lord Lawrence's Administration, the question was fully considered on more than one occasion. It would conduce very much to a thorough understanding of the matter if the opinions then given by Sir William Mansfield, Sir Henry Durand, and other high authorities, could now be made public. The conclusions of the Government of India at the time were given in these words:—"We object to any interference in the affairs of Afghanistan by a forcible or amicable occupation of any post or tract in the country beyond our own frontier, inasmuch as we think such a measure would, under present circumstances, engender irritation, defiance,



and hatred in the minds of Afghans, without in the least strengthening our power either for attack or defence."

In conclusion, I trust that there will be no occasion for war with Afghanistan; and I am convinced that this must be the sincere desire even of those who wish for a rectification of our frontier. No one can be so unreasonable as to wish to rectify our frontier by means of a war which must alienate from us the people in whose country our extended military frontier would lie.

There is, I am happy to say, Mr. Mayor, one bright spot in the present position of affairs. I allude to the spirit which has been manifested by the army in India. We know well what the feeling of the British army is whenever the honour and dignity of the Crown appear to be involved, but we have recently had the satisfaction of seeing the high spirit displayed by the Native army of India. The cheerfulness with which they obeyed the order to embark for Malta, and the enthusiasm with which they have responded to the call on this occasion, merits all praise, and not less satisfactory is the spirit which has been manifested by the Native Princes of India. The war, if there is to be a war, will doubtless be very costly. The cost of the last Afghan war was £17,000,000. The cost of the next war must be borne by this country. India, especially after the recent famine, is too poor to bear it. This consideration, however, although not altogether unimportant in the present condition of trade in this country, is of minor consequence compared with the question whether the war is just, and whether it is necessary, and upon these two most essential questions, I am sorry to say, it is quite impossible for me, in the present state of the information before the public, to pronounce a decided or positive opinion.