

1874

The Oxus and the Indus (1874)

Evans Bell

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THE OXUS AND THE INDUS.

BY

MAJOR EVANS BELL,

AUTHOR OF "RETROSPECTS AND PROSPECTS OF INDIAN POLICY", ETC.

SECOND EDITION,

REVISED AND CONSIDERABLY ENLARGED.

LONDON:

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T. RICHARDS, 37, GREAT QUEEN STREET.

P R E F A C E.

IN the House of Lords, on Friday the 9th of May, Lord Napier and Ettrick, doubly entitled as a former Ambassador at St. Petersburg, and as a recent Governor and temporary Viceroy in India, to speak with some weight on the subject, asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs "whether Her Majesty's Government would grant the moral and material support of England to the Ameer of Afghanistan in case of unprovoked aggression upon his dominions?" He argued that having by negotiations with Russia fixed the boundaries of Afghanistan, we had undertaken the duty, strengthened by "motives of policy in connection with the welfare of India," of defending those boundaries; and that we had also acquired, by our subsidies and general support, the right of controlling to some extent the government of "that semi-barbarous and semi-dependent State." "If," he said, "Afghanistan should prove a restless and aggressive neighbour, she must be restrained by some one. If we did not restrain her action, she must, in the last resort, be restrained by Russia. If Russian forces entered the territories of Afghanistan on one side, he thought it would be absolutely necessary that English forces should enter on the other, and in all probability some worse results would arise from the conflict of these forces than could arise from an independent action on the part of England."

"All that," Lord Derby, in reply to Lord Napier, "felt himself justified in saying" was, "that to maintain the integrity and territorial independence of Afghanistan is, and ought to be, a most important object of English policy; that any interference with the national independence of Afghanistan would be regarded by Her Majesty's Government as a very grave matter, requiring their most serious and careful consideration; and that if such an interference occurred, it is highly probable that this country would

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interpose." His immediate predecessor in office, Lord Granville, entirely agreed with Lord Derby. Lord Stanley of Alderley, distinguished as an Oriental traveller and scholar, congratulated the Foreign Secretary on the satisfactory statement he had made. Lord Napier having offered a few words of explanation, the subject dropped.

It appears to me that there were on this occasion some remarkable deficiencies of exposition. Notwithstanding their perfect unanimity in advocating the territorial integrity of Afghanistan, and in deprecating the violation of that integrity by Russian troops, not one noble Lord, in or out of office, made any allusion to the undeniable fact that such a violation of Afghan territory has been diplomatically announced as imminent. Moreover, all the warnings and all the assurances referred alike and solely to the danger of military intervention,—a difficulty more likely to occur than any Peer suggested, and less easily met, when it does occur, than may have been supposed, but by no means the only possible difficulty we may shortly have to meet. If precautions are not taken in time, we may soon begin to find that British influence is gradually diminishing and disappearing, not in consequence of any military movement by Russia within Afghan territory, but by corruption and intrigue in high and low places, at the capital and in the out-lying provinces, and by the closer and augmenting tenacity of the Russian grasp on the Oxus. It is against a gradual growth of Russian influence at Cabul, and especially against Russian interference, avowed or secret, in the event of a disputed succession, that we ought most jealously to guard. This can only be done by a new compact with the Ameer Sher Ali. Only thus can we acquire and permanently retain that supremacy in the counsels of Cabul which even Prince Gortschakoff exhorts us to exercise, and which is absolutely essential for the peace and prosperity of India. Cordially agreeing with Lord Derby in his expressed aversion "to establish English control over Afghanistan against the will of its Sovereign and its people," I believe that this indispensable control over the Afghan Government can be gained, with princely and popular consent.

I have heard nothing since 1869, that can invalidate the plan of ceding unprofitable territory to its former possessors, as a

means of extending our beneficial influence and concentrating our military strength. Nothing has been done, or proposed, so far as one can learn from any published despatch or from any Parliamentary debate, down to that of last month inclusive,—to nullify or to modify the difficulties of the situation, as they stood in 1869. Nothing certainly has happened, nor have any efficient steps been taken by our Government to clear the North-West horizon from those two black and gathering clouds that harass and menace the Indian Empire—the persistent hostility of the mountaineers, and the continuous advance of Russia towards the Indus.

If the measures here proposed were impolitic or impracticable some intelligible reasons could be surely given for their rejection. Nor does it seem unreasonable to ask from those who deprecate the policy of confidence and co-operation which it is the object of these pages to advocate, what scheme they have to offer for the settlement of the North-West frontier and the security of India. Excepting the military projects for a further advance beyond our present limits, no scheme whatever has been propounded. Not even the expression of some hope of permanently pacifying the frontier and opening the Passes at any future period, has come to my knowledge. I have waited and searched in vain for something to answer. In some of the notices that were given to the first edition of this book, its policy was provisionally approved, though further discussion was desired; but where doubt or dislike was intimated, there was no controversy.

Even the lamented Mr. J. W. S. Wyllie, whose interesting essay in the *Fortnightly Review*, for December 1869,—most valuable for the accuracy of its information,—contained some brief strictures, left my distinctive argument untouched. It is true that as he had held an important post in the Calcutta Foreign Office during the administrations of Lord Elgin and Lord Lawrence, when the views of Sir Henry Durand, assailed by me, were in the ascendant, his main object was to complete an apology for the Afghan policy of that period. But if, in doing so, he could, by exposing the absurdity or impracticability of the assailant's own views, have wounded him in a vital quarter, the advantage would most assuredly not have been thrown away.

The book, whatever its demerits, and however obscure its author, was decidedly aggressive, and, if it were weak, deserved and invited at least a knock-down blow. Nothing of the sort was attempted, or has ever been attempted, here or in India, by any one.

The whole subject was brought before a meeting of the East India Association, at which many well informed persons were present, on the 18th of March last, but while support and confirmation of a very important character came forward on my side of the question, the only objections urged were, as they everywhere and always have been, purely declamatory, and for the most part irrelevant, either contemptuous towards the Afghan people, or vain-glorious with reference to ourselves.

No attention seems ever to be given to the indications of an increasing regard for human life, and of more enlightened principles of government, that have been manifested in the action and policy of the present Ameer of Afghanistan, both during the civil war and since the pacification of the country.

In reply to the argument, based on recorded facts, that the British Government cannot reduce the Hill tribes to good order, or keep the Passes open, but that the Afghan Government formerly did so, and could, with our concurrence, do so again, we are told that the Afghans are a ferocious and perfidious race, and can never be trusted. This inhuman doctrine has no foundation in either history or ethnology; science and experience equally contradict it. There is not on the face of the globe, and there never has been, any race that is inherently treacherous or turbulent. There are no incidents in the annals of Afghanistan that cannot be paralleled in our own, or in those of the other nations of Europe. National Character grows and changes. The Afghan Government has visibly improved before the eyes of the present generation, and may, with British counsel and countenance, improve still more, and that very rapidly. Meanwhile, there is no question of imposing Afghan rule upon a reluctant and highly civilised population, but only one of restoring it, on our own conditions and under our control, among Afghan tribes who would rejoice at reunion.

It is not proposed that the Imperial Government of India should resign any of its power or influence between the Indus

and the Oxus: on the contrary, it is believed that by the means here suggested, British power would be consolidated within the Punjab, and British influence extended and strengthened in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Until the futility of these expectations, and the nullity of the foundation on which they rest, are shown, there can be no serious or effectual opposition to the policy of this book. Nothing can be more erroneous, as will be shown further on in the proper place, than to say that this matter was decided once for all in 1857, when the proposal of Lord Lawrence to transfer Peshawur to Dost Mohammed was absolutely rejected by Lord Canning. That was, in fact, a very different matter. To assert roundly that British territory must never be ceded, because all previous judgments are against it, is simply to beg the question as a whole, all particulars of time and circumstance being excluded from consideration.

One great object of the following pages has been to show from recent experience that our local functionaries must not be trusted in India, any more than they are in Great Britain and Ireland, to guide Imperial affairs. Almost in direct proportion to the degree of their departmental dexterity, and the length of their Eastern residence, they are generally incapacitated for the higher branch of statesmanship. A clear view of Imperial operations can only be obtained from the central watch-tower. At the same time it would be premature, if not presumptuous, to endeavour to define exactly the limits of such a transaction as this, or to enter upon the dictation of its practical details, without a thorough topographical and technical intelligence, a perfect knowledge of ways and means and persons, to which a politician at home need make no pretension. We may give the fullest credit for the requisite information and skill to the executive authorities in India. The fullest confidence may be placed in their zeal and ability to perform what the Nation desires and the Sovereign commands. But a solicitude for the maintenance of British "prestige" so frequently presents itself as the sole official objection to ceding territory, that I must depart a little from the rule just prescribed, in order to give a hint of the actual procedure that is contemplated.

The measure in question ought to be carried out in such a manner that no one should be able to prate of British prestige

being lost or diminished. No one should be able to say, or to suppose, that the restoration of Afghan territory to the Afghan State was a symptom, or was likely to be the cause, of weakness in the British Empire. It should be made the occasion of a display of our military power on so grand a scale, and on such a conspicuous field, that all Central Asia and all India should ring of it. With the hearty good will of the Afghan Government,—without, it may be hoped, a shot being fired, certainly without anything worthy the name of a contest,—the Afghan succession and the Imperial supremacy of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, should be settled and proclaimed simultaneously.

July 1st, 1874.



THE OXUS AND THE INDUS.

THE Eastern Question, viewed with exclusive regard to the interests of Great Britain, identical in this instance with the interests of humanity, is nothing more than this, — Shall British or Russian influence predominate in the regions between the Oxus and the Indus? If all the Provinces of Afghanistan can be united under one strong Government, if the rulers of Balkh and Herat can be enabled to hold their own against all comers, in friendly concert with the rulers of India, the Eastern Question is settled for us. Russian agents at Teheran, and even in Turkey, might then be left to do their worst. We, among all the nations of Europe, need then care the least about the occupancy of Constantinople. Baffled and checked in Central Asia, the expansive impulse of Russia must be drawn more closely within the range of European diplomacy, where Great Britain cannot be isolated. France, Italy, and Austria, very indifferent as to the fate of Cabul and Bokhara, will always insist on a controlling voice in the Levant.

In stating the problem concisely, I do not pretend to set forth anything new or original. It will be seen by-and-by that we have sometimes mismanaged it, that we have very often, and very recently, neglected or refused to consider the matter at all, but whenever we have condescended to give it any attention, our policy has been always the same. The formation of a strong and friendly Government in Afghanistan was the aim of our policy in 1839, when we carried Shah Sujah to the throne of Cabul. Such was the aim of our policy in 1855, when we made a treaty of "perpetual peace and friendship" with the Ameer Dost

Mohammed Khan and "his heirs."* Such was the aim of our policy in 1857, when under a fresh treaty we gave the same Ameer material assistance, "to defend and maintain his present possessions."† Such, doubtless, was our aim in furnishing his son, Sher Ali Khan, however late in the day, with supplies of money and arms. And such, we may suppose, was the aim of the new engagements with that Prince, which Lord Mayo is understood to have negotiated at Umballa in April 1869.

Hitherto the object has not been attained. Hitherto the means successively employed by us have signally failed.

There is no dispute as to our object. The only dispute is as to the means by which it is to be attained.

After a military and political struggle protracted through more than three years, after the expenditure of nearly twenty millions sterling, and the destruction of an entire British army, the King, whom we had carried to a throne in 1839, found a bloody grave in a ditch outside his capital in 1842, amid "events which brought into question his fidelity to the Government by which he was restored."‡ The avenging victories of Nott and Pollock, though their moral effect was invaluable at the time, could not blind the eyes of India and the world to what had really occurred, or blot out the memory of an awful disaster. The broad facts were but too obvious. The British Power had receded, leaving behind it ruin and disorder, having lost much, and suffered much, having gained nothing at all. When our forces left the country, nothing had been settled, nothing had been established, nothing had been changed by our intervention, except that the people had learned to hate us. For the following ten years, British influence in Afghanistan was almost entirely extinguished, and its chieftains were exposed more absolutely than before to the advances and menaces of their powerful neighbours.

In that interval, however, the restored Ameer Dost

* *Collection of Treaties*, Calcutta (Longman and Co., London), vol. ii, p. 430, and see *Appendix A*.

† *Ibid.*, p. 431.

‡ Lord Ellenborough's Proclamation of October 1st, 1842; *Kaye's War in Afghanistan*, vol. iii, p. 376.

Mohammed, having made hostile demonstrations in vain during the Punjaub wars, and fruitlessly incited the hill tribes of the Peshawur border against us for several years, perceived that we held with a firm grasp our new possession on his frontier; and the pressure of Persia, encouraging intrigues and rivalry in his own family, beginning to shake his authority, the Ameer in 1854 made friendly overtures to our Government. By the Treaty of 1855, the Ameer Dost Mohammed gained absolution for the past, and a clear recognition of his title as an independent Sovereign. If, which is very probable, this policy of reconciliation can be shown to have helped in the establishment of a central authority at Cabul, it was so far conducive, though in a small way, towards the achievement of our great object, the consolidation of Afghanistan into a strong and united State. But it cannot be pretended that the measures of 1855 were successful or sufficient for that great object. Before the end of 1856, the King of Persia had occupied Herat with a large army, and claimed Imperial supremacy over the whole of Afghanistan. This led to the costly Persian war, and to the second Treaty with Dost Mohammed in 1857, by which, without actually guaranteeing his "present possessions in Balkh, Cabul, and Candahar," we undertook to assist him with money and munitions of war "to defend and maintain" them "against Persia."^{*}

Persia was coerced by our fleet and army; and the new Treaty with Dost Mohammed proved to have been most opportunely concluded, for if we had been on bad terms with the Afghans in 1857, they might have thrown their weight into the scale against us with fearful, perhaps fatal effect. But this accidental benefit could not have been foreseen. The limited and temporary advantage of these measures certainly failed to secure our great object of an orderly and united State in Afghanistan, permanently amenable to British influence. The mission of Major (now Major-General) H. B. Lumsden and his brother to Candahar was arranged on terms so ill considered, and so utterly unsecured, that our envoys were kept more like

^{*} *Collection of Treaties*, vol. ii, p. 431.

prisoners than guests, and were constantly in danger of assassination. As if we had exhausted all our resources in this humiliating experiment, every opportunity of intervention and intercourse was thrown away, between the return of the Lumsdens in 1858, and the death of Dost Mohammed in 1863. That greatest of all possible opportunities was not merely rejected, it was perverted to our damage and disgrace.

The right of primogeniture has never prevailed in Afghanistan, or in any Mohammedan State. Such a right would be obviously incompatible with those peculiar incidents of a polygamous household,—the absolute legitimacy of all acknowledged sons, and the inequality of their rank and consideration in the family according to the position of their mothers. Amid varying customs of succession to the throne in different countries, one rule is universally recognised as perfectly conformable with Musulman law, that the reigning Sovereign may select from among his sons that one whom he may consider most worthy to succeed him. In accordance with this patriarchal usage, the Ameer Dost Mohammed had chosen Gholam Hyder Khan as heir-apparent,—who, under that title, concluded with our Government the Treaty of 1855. Gholam Hyder, Sher Ali Khan the present Ameer, and their more noted brother, Mohammed Akbar Khan, were all sons of the Ameer's favourite wife, a lady of high descent. On Gholam Hyder's death,—Akbar Khan having died some years previously,—the Ameer nominated Sher Ali Khan as his successor; and on his own death-bed, in the camp before Herat, confirmed the selection in a family council, and recorded it in a written testament. Dost Mohammed died on June 9th, 1863. All these facts were duly notified to the Governor-General of India.

The succession of Sher Ali Khan is thus described in an article of the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1867, since avowed and accepted as a demi-official defence of Sir John Lawrence's foreign policy.

“ Sher Ali Khan it was whom Dost Mohammed, some time before the expedition to Herat, had publicly selected as his successor, passing over the claims of both the elder Princes, Afzul

Khan and Azim Khan. The selection, according to family custom, was authoritative. Sher Ali ever since had borne the designation of heir-apparent; and when Dost Mohammed died, none ventured to question his title to succeed. Even Azim Khan himself in that first hour of confusion was fain to join in the general homage due to Sher Ali as rightful Ameer of Afghanistan.*

The capture of Herat, the last and crowning triumph of Dost Mohammed's memorable career, was received with apparent indifference both in London and Calcutta. The *Times*, which may be considered as a tolerably fair exponent of the ruling opinion in high places, set down the whole affair as "a battle of kites and crows," and declared the contest for Herat, "though so inexhaustibly interesting for Afghans and Persians," to be "of no concern to us."† It is extremely doubtful whether the same view was taken at St. Petersburg.

It may have been difficult for most Englishmen to look so far east, when every eye was fixed on the gigantic struggle of slavery and freedom in the West, from which almost every one had so much—politically, socially or commercially—to hope or to fear. In the summer of 1863 the civil war in the United States was at its height, and the cotton-famine of Lancashire (the touch-stone of moral progress in Great Britain) had carried a golden harvest to India. The wealth of Bombay was boiling over, but had not yet reached the point of evaporation. At Calcutta financial affairs were in the ascendant; 1862 was the first year since the Rebellion of 1857 in which there had not been a deficit, in which the Home Charges had not been defrayed from loans raised on the London Stock Exchange. Great was official exultation about that time at the newly discovered elasticity of the Indian revenue, continuously manifested ever since in a very remarkable manner, though counterbalanced in a manner equally remarkable, by the elasticity of the expenditure. Visions of perpetual prosperity ruled the hour all over India in 1863. No one seems to have had a thought for Central Asia. The policy

* *Edinburgh Review*, No. 255, January 1867, p. 19.

† *The Times*, August 19th, 1863.

of 1839, 1855, and 1857, was completely forgotten, or remembered only to be reviled. There was no one to remind our Government that promptitude and decision on their part might prevent a war of succession in the dominions of Dost Mohammed, and keep the Afghan State undivided, connected with us by new ties and willing obligations.

Never did our Government stand more in need of a reminder, had it only been a good newspaper article. When the crisis produced by the fall of Herat and the death of Dost Mohammed pressed most strongly for consideration, the Governor-General, Lord Elgin, was at Simla, which he left on the 26th September, 1863, on a tour through the Punjaub, intending to visit the frontier station of Peshawur, and to be at Lahore, where a great camp of exercise was to be assembled under the Commander-in-Chief himself, about the close of the year. All the members of the Governor-General's Council were at Calcutta, where the routine business of Government was carried on. The Foreign Secretary, Colonel (afterwards Sir Henry) Durand, accompanied the Viceroy on his tour. Up to the date of Lord Elgin's lamented death, which happened on the 20th November, 1863, at Dhurmsala in the valley of Kangra, Sher Ali Khan's overtures for our recognition had met with no response. Although the desire of Dost Mohammed for our support in settling the succession in his family was made sufficiently manifest when the Treaty of 1855 was concluded for the Ameer, "*and on the part of his heirs,*" by his son, Gholam Hyder, "*as the representative of Ameer Dost Mohammed Khan, and in person on his own account as heir-apparent;*"* and again, when, on the death of Gholam Hyder, the Ameer informed the Government of India that he had nominated one of his younger sons, Sher Ali Khan, to succeed to all his dominions, the language and conduct of the British authorities, on every occasion between Dost Mohammed's death and the final success of Sher Ali Khan, repeatedly left the field quite open for a fratricidal war. Though all history, and all political science might have taught us that no combination of untoward events could

* *Collection of Treaties*, vol. ii, p. 431, see Appendix A.

conduce to the disunion and disorder of the Afghan territories so surely as a disputed succession, or promote so directly the designs of a rival Power, we neglected all the chances that offered, and all the means at our disposal for founding a durable settlement.

There ought not to have been a moment's doubt or hesitation as to Sher Ali Khan's title. We had explicitly acknowledged the right of Dost Mohammed to nominate his successor when the Treaty of 1855 was ratified by the Governor-General. A second nomination, made by Dost Mohammed on the death of the first heir-apparent, was duly notified to our Government. On the death of his father, the designated heir peaceably assumed the reins of power. No one denied or disputed his right. His brothers professed submission to his authority. Why was not this perfectly regular succession promptly recognised by the British Government?

In the absence of the consultative Minutes,—if any were recorded,—and of the other official documents of the day, we can only conjecture now,—as the Afghans, of all parties, must have conjectured then,—that under some predominant influence at our political head-quarters (probably that of Colonel H. M. Durand, the Foreign Secretary) Sher Ali Khan was not the British candidate,—that our Government for the time being would have preferred one of his brothers; and though not prepared to support our own man openly, hoped that something might turn up for his advantage, if we deferred as long as possible the recognition of the legitimate successor.

That there are considerable grounds for imputing this half-hearted and faithless policy to one or more of the high functionaries then in power will hardly, I think, be disputed.

A pamphlet published at Calcutta, highly eulogistic of Sir John Lawrence's foreign policy, and known to be of demi-official authority, gives the following retrospective glance at the unworthy suspicions and unlawful self-seekings that misled the British authorities:

"There were many who believed that Mohammed Azim Khan was superior in capacity to Sher Ali Khan, and that he was more

loyally disposed towards the British Government during the crisis of 1857 than any other Afghan Sirdar.”*

Here is an extract from a letter of the Calcutta Correspondent of the *Times*, understood to be identical with the Editor of the *Friend of India*, and a person generally well informed as to the doings of the Indian Foreign Office. This letter, dated July 23rd, 1863, a month after Dost Mohammed's death, appeared in the *Times* of August 28th. “The new Ameer, Sher Ali Khan,” says our own Correspondent, “is as notoriously hostile to the English alliance as his brother by a different mother, and rival, Azim Khan, is in favour of it.”

Again in his letter of August 22nd, 1863, published in the *Times* of September 28th, he calls Azim Khan “our friend.”

I strongly suspect the real origin of these rumours to have been that Azim Khan, having been for some years Governor of the districts of Koorum and Khost, bordering on the British frontier, had taken full advantage of every opportunity of intercourse with English officers to sound his own praises, and to spread a belief that he alone was friendly, and the rest of the family hostile. During his pensioned retirement at Rawulpindee, on British territory, in 1865, he probably did his best to strengthen the impression in his favour. I cannot help feeling somewhat confirmed in this view by the following passages from Lord Lawrence's speech in the House of Lords on April 19th. Speaking of the Treaty concluded with Dost Mohammed in 1855, he said:—

“Sir Herbert Edwardes” (then Commissioner of Peshawur) “put himself into communication with a son of the Ameer, who was then Governor of a border province of Afghanistan” (this was Azim Khan) “and through him made arrangements with the father. I was then the chief civil and military authority in the Punjab, and with my consent he allowed the son of the Ameer to say, that if his father was willing to come forward we should meet him half-way.”

And after relating the death of Afzul Khan, the eldest son of Dost Mohammed, who by Azim Khan's agency,—

* *Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence* (reprinted from the *Englishman*, of January 4th, 1869), Calcutta, 1869, p. 7.

as we shall see,—contrived to dispossess the Ameer Sher Ali of part of his dominions, and ruled at Cabul from June 1866, to October 1867, he said :—

“His brother, who had first sought relations with us” (Azim Khan) “ascended the throne. The Ameer,” (a title quite unwarranted by Azim Khan’s brief usurpation) “however, did not fulfil the expectations of his friends. Some of those who had gained him his throne fell off, and after some months he was expelled from the country.”

• In the article of the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1867, Azim Khan is pronounced to have been “incomparably Afzul Khan’s superior in state-craft,” while Sher Ali is declared “not equal to Azim Khan as a statesman,” and it is said that his “political proclivities had hitherto been towards a Persian, rather than an English alliance.” The notions that swayed the Foreign Office at Calcutta in 1863, come out very clearly in the following passage :—

• “Without any real love for the English, Azim Khan had yet established a strong claim upon our goodwill by the course he adopted in 1857, when the whole Afghan nation clamoured to be led down the passes that they might join the mutinous Sepoys in a meritorious extermination of the infidel English. Dost Mohammed would, perhaps, have been unable to resist the popular cry but for Azim Khan’s steadfast and openly declared advocacy of the English cause.”*

I am inclined to attribute these supposed good offices to Azim Khan’s own invention, or to that artful manipulation of the British Moonshee, or news-writer at Cabul, in which, as the *Edinburgh Reviewer* tells us, that wily Sirdar was so great an adept.† Such considerations, however, even if they had been well founded, ought to have been far beneath a great Government like ours. We could well afford to despise the evil dispositions of six years back ; while any reliance upon what is called the “loyalty” or “friendship” of one Afghan Chief more than another, was a very weak pretext for slighting the lawful successor, a totally inadequate excuse for deviating from the straightforward course of full and immediate recognition.

• * *Edinburgh Review*, No. 255, January 1867, p. 18.

† *Ibid.*, January 1867, pp. 31, 32, 33.

The late lamented Mr. J. W. S. Wyllie, whose comments on the first edition of this little book call for some notice on my part, characterised my suspicion that Azim Khan was the British favourite as a "gross absurdity," adding, with full official knowledge of the facts, that "the sympathies of the Indian Government were never at any time on Azim Khan's side, and, *when once Sher Ali had been recognised*, they were invariably exerted in favour of Sher Ali, and of him only."* Here he does not deny,—he rather seems to admit,—that *before Sher Ali had been recognised* the sympathies of the Indian Government had been exerted in favour of some one else, though not of Azim Khan. And I have no doubt that while all the reliance of the Calcutta Foreign Office was placed upon Azim Khan, its nominal candidate for the Afghan succession was, in accordance with his own scheme, Afzul Khan, his elder brother. In the words of Mr. Wyllie himself, "Afzul Khan was in truth a nonentity, set up by Azim Khan as a convenient and decorous screen to cover the motive power of his own superior will."

"We find the factions in the field reduced practically to two; one headed by Sher Ali at Candahar, the other by Azim Khan at Cabul. In the rivalry between these two parties, Sher Ali's right pitted against Azim Khan's ambition, the whole civil war of Afghanistan has almost from the outset been comprised."*

Not until December 1863, just six months after his father's death, and three weeks after Lord Elgin's death, —when Sir William Denison, as senior Governor, had taken provisional charge of the Viceregal office, —was Sher Ali Khan recognised by our Government as the Ameer of Afghanistan. It may be useful to see what account of this step is given by the *Friend of India*, a journal generally accredited with some authority as an organ, or at least as an obsequious partisan, of the Calcutta Foreign

* Letter in the *Daily News*, December 27th, 1869.

† *Fortnightly Review*, December 1869, p. 588.

Office. On December 24th, 1863, the Editor writes as follows :—

“When the late Dost Mohammed appointed his son” (Sher Ali Khan) “his heir and successor, he duly notified the fact to our Government.

“So long as it was doubtful whether the new Ameer would make good his claims,” (*i. e.*, so long as our countenance would have been useful to him,) “we abstained from recognising his position. But now that his opponents, Azim Khan and Afzul Khan are quiet, however personally discontented, our Government has done only what is just and politic in strengthening his power by their formal recognition.”

This policy has been called by me half-hearted and faithless. It was half-hearted, because we virtually demurred to the succession of Sher Ali Khan without venturing to object openly, to support another candidate, or even to impose conditions for our recognition. It was faithless, because by the Treaty of 1855 we had distinctly accepted the line of inheritance instituted by Dost Mohammed, and on the decease of the heir named in that Treaty, the nomination of a full brother, Sher Ali Khan, in his place, was duly communicated to our Government. In that same Treaty we had promised “never to interfere,”* and now, on the very first occasion after Dost Mohammed’s death, under the pretence of impartiality and non-intervention, we practised the most injurious interference, by “abstaining from recognising” the reigning Prince’s “position.” At the most critical conjuncture possible, the first succession in a new dynasty, we struck a blow at the very foundation-stone of a strong and stable Government.

The *Friend of India* talks of Sher Ali’s “opponents.” He had no opponents, until, by “abstaining from recognising his position” as ruling Ameer, which the *Friend’s* language admits he had made good, we encouraged his brothers to conspire and rebel against him. The well understood fact that there were secret rivals in his family ought to have been an additional plea for prompt recognition, if perfect good faith was to be preserved.

I have said that the tardy recognition of the new Ameer

* Appendix A.

in December 1863, while Sir William Denison was at the head of affairs at Calcutta, produced improved relations between the Government of India and the Ruler of Afghanistan. But it must not be supposed that a complete redress and rectification of the injury done to Sher Ali Khan was thereby effected, or that full confidence in British good faith and friendly intentions can have been thereby restored. The mischief was in a great measure done, and irretrievable. A flat denial of Sher Ali's inherent right to the succession under his father's appointment, and a more or less concealed preference on our part for some other member of the family, were obviously involved in postponing his recognition for six months. Unless the actual letter of recognition contained some judiciously evasive apology for the delay,—attributing it, let us say, to Lord Elgin's illness and death,—the difficulty of avoiding a denial of Sher Ali's right to the inheritance must have been almost insurmountable. After so long a silence, some explanation was evidently called for.

Whether the letter of recognition was or was not couched in some such terms as those just quoted from the *Friend of India*,—whether Sher Ali Khan was or was not told in substance, that we had “abstained from recognising his position,” “so long as it was doubtful” that he “could make good his claims;” whether he was plainly told or not that the Government of India would not forestall the choice of the Afghan Chieftains and people,—it must have been perfectly clear to him and to all interested parties, that we ignored his title, and recognised him only by virtue of possession. We admitted the *fact* only, not the *right*. By so doing we informed Sher Ali Khan, his usual advisers, and his malcontent relatives,—sure to have at least one informant in the Durbar,—that the British Government had no regard for any law or custom of succession, would have recognised any one of the brothers, and cared so little for Dost Mohammed's nominee as to have waited six months in the expectation—perhaps in the hope—that he would be supplanted by one of his rivals. The question of succession was thus

degraded by the British Government from a point of *right* into a point of *fact*, from a matter of Mussulman law, family compact, and Treaty engagements, into a mere matter of brute force and casual possession. It followed as a logical consequence of this policy,—and equally whether proclaimed in words or not,—that we should always esteem possession as the best, if not the only proof of sovereignty, and that if any one of the brothers could contrive to gain the capital, and to make himself Ameer *in fact* by the death or flight of his predecessor, he would meet with no hindrance or interruption from our Government, and would be recognised—to say the least,—as freely and as promptly as Sher Ali Khan had been.

This may not have been the deliberate policy, or even the conscious line of reasoning, adopted by our Government; the lesson drawn by the rival parties in Afghanistan may not have been what is here suggested; but most certainly our Government acted as if it wished to teach that lesson, and the rival parties in Afghanistan acted as if they had learned it. And the subsequent action of our Government, down to December 1868, was entirely in accordance with the lesson it had taught. We recognised three brothers, one after another, as Ameer of Cabul, solely by virtue of their holding the capital. In apparent obedience to the same rule, we have now reverted to the first of the three.

• In December 1863, when the Ameer Sher Ali Khan's letter, announcing his father's death and his own accession, was answered by Sir William Denison, the Under Secretary at the Calcutta Foreign Office was Mr. J. W. S. Wyllie, afterwards the acknowledged author of the article in the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1867, so often quoted in these pages. The apology for Lord Lawrence's Afghan policy therein commenced was continued by him in a very interesting essay, signed with his name, in the *Fortnightly Review* for December 1869, containing some brief strictures on the first edition of this book, in the justice of which I could not acquiesce. My reply to these strictures was admitted into the columns of the *Daily*

News,* where Mr. Wyllie's rejoinder also appeared. Having access to the secret records of his old department, Mr. Wyllie, in response to my challenge, produced a copy of Sir William Denison's letter, in its English version, which was in the following terms:—

“To his Highness AMEER SHER ALI KHAN, *Walee of Cabul, etc.*

“Your friendly letter communicating the melancholy tidings of your father's death was received by my lamented predecessor, Lord Elgin, with the utmost regret for the loss of so firm and constant an ally of the British Government. You will have learned from my separate letter of the death of the late Viceroy and Governor General, an event which was preceded by a severe and protracted illness, during which a formal reply to your announcement was necessarily postponed. My separate letter will also have informed you that I have assumed the office of Governor General, and that I take this early opportunity of acknowledging the receipt of your *khwareeta*, in which you intimate your succession to the late Ameer Dost Mahomed Khan, and your desire, as Ruler of Afghanistan, to maintain the same friendly relations with the British Government as have heretofore existed. You may rest assured that the British Government participate in this desire, and I sincerely trust that under your rule Afghanistan may possess a strong and united government, and that the good understanding and friendship that prevailed during the life time of the late Ameer, your predecessor, may continue to gain strength and stability under your own administration. Moved by a sincere wish for the permanent welfare of your rule and of the people of Afghanistan, I deem it advisable to commend to your careful consideration and attention the words of the late Viceroy, when acknowledging, in his letter of 3rd July last, the announcement made by the late Ameer of the capture of Herat by storm under your Highness's leading. I feel that I cannot too strongly press upon your attention the necessity for your taking the utmost care to prevent any of your Highness's officers on the Persian frontier from permitting themselves to be led into any measures or enterprises which could justly give umbrage to Persia. I am confident that your Highness, conscious how greatly the interests of yourself and the Afghan people are at stake in this matter, will be solicitous to maintain peace and order on your own frontiers, and will countenance no aggression on the part of any persons over whom your Highness's officers have influence.”

Decr. 8th, 1863.

(Signed) W. DENISON.”†

* December 17th, 1869; January 1st and 4th, 1870.

† *Daily News*, December 27th, 1869.

This interesting document very remarkably confirms the charge, and verifies the imputations, brought against the Indian Foreign Office in the previous pages. Although its terms are more cautious and considerate than I had expected, they amount, as I anticipated, to an "evasive apology for the delay, attributing it, let us say, to Lord Elgin's illness and death."* Mr. Wyllie himself admitted that it was, in fact, an evasive apology, for he "specifically disavowed" the "accidental" plea, and based the defence of Lord Elgin's Government, for its "apparent dilatoriness" in recognizing the Ameer Sher Ali, "on policy alone".† "Extenuation need not be pleaded", he had said in the article which led to our controversy, "when the means of justification are ample".‡ But until the appearance last year of a volume containing extracts from Lord Elgin's Letters and Journals,§ we had no means of knowing how very evasive, not to say unvarnished, that apology was. In the letter of recognition, the signature of which, in the words of Mr. Wyllie, "Lord Elgin's advisers" "procured from Sir William Denison",|| reference is made to the "severe and protracted illness" of the late Viceroy, "during which a formal reply to your announcement was necessarily postponed".¶ The recently published letters, however, prove that the illness of Lord Elgin could not with any propriety be called "protracted", while its brief and fatal severity can have had no influence whatever on the delay in recognising the accession of Sher Ali. The death of Dost Mohammed on the 9th June, 1863, must have been known at Simla before the end of the month. Lord Elgin having started for his tour through the Punjab on the 26th September, up to the 22nd October "continued his march on horseback". We are told that in a long letter to Sir Charles Wood of the 18th October, and in "others of the same date, there is no hint of suffering or of ill-health."*** On the 4th November, "having with

* Ante, p. 12.

† Daily News, December 27th, 1869.

‡ Fortnightly Review, December 1869, p. 2.

§ Letters and Journals of James, Eighth Earl of Elgin, edited by Theodore Walrond, C.B. (John Murray), 1872.

|| Daily News, December 27th, 1869.

¶ Ante, p. 14.

*** Letters and Journals, pp. 457, 459.

difficulty reached Dhurmsala, a station in the Kangra Valley, he wrote to Sir Charles Wood in an altered tone, yet still hopeful and cheerful." "The nature and extent of the mischief", he says in this letter, "are not sufficiently ascertained yet to enable me to say positively whether my power of doing my duty is likely to be in any degree impaired by what has happened." Moreover, he expressly states, "No change has taken place in our plans. We move rather more slowly, and I have given up the idea of going to Peshawur; but this is rather occasioned by the desire to confer with the Punjaub Government, while these affairs on the frontier are in progress, than by my mishap."

"I think", he continues, "that the expedition" (against the Sitana fanatics) "will be a success; and I labour incessantly to urge the necessity of confining its objects to the first intentions. Plausible reasons for enlarging the scope of such adventures are never wanting, but I shall endeavour to keep this within its limits."*

This was written on the 4th November. It is clear, therefore, that the noble sufferer, intent on duty to the last, remained in the full and active exercise of supreme authority up to that date. On the 6th the attack was declared to be mortal. On the 20th he died. And this is what is called in the Calcutta Foreign Office a "protracted illness."

Both positive and negative evidence may be drawn from the *Letters and Journals* to show that Lord Elgin was badly informed and badly advised as to the affairs of Afghanistan, and that the announcement by the Ameer Sher Ali Khan of his accession was received with offensive silence, from no necessity, from no inadvertence,—as, indeed, Mr. Wyllie avowed,—but from deliberate motives of what was called policy. No extract is given in the recently published volume from any letter to Sir Charles Wood between June 17th, 1863, when the news of Dost Mohammed's death could hardly have arrived, and August 30th, when the time for a gracious and cordial greeting may be said to have passed away. And in a letter of the

* *Letters and Journals*, p. 458.

latter date, the Viceroy mentions that he has "arranged with the Commander-in-Chief" to hold a "camp of exercise" at Lahore, as he considers that the "*state of affairs in Afghanistan, and on our frontier*, would render a demonstration, which would at once afford evidence of our military strength, and gratify the pride and self-importance of the Sikh chiefs, at this moment especially opportune."*

The distinct mention here of "*our frontier*",—measures to be taken against the Hindostanee fanatics of Sitana being then imminent,—shows that "the affairs in Afghanistan", separately referred to, can only have been the internal affairs of that country. It is not apparent how that country's affairs can have rendered a "demonstration" opportune and advisable, unless the Ameer Sher Ali Khan was, indeed, supposed to be "hostile to the English alliance."† Whether such really was the supposition at political Head Quarters in August 1863, or not, we certainly learn in a despatch dated the 9th March 1864, from the Government of India to the Secretary of State, reporting on the Umbeyla campaign against the Sitana fanatics, that the secret enmity of Sher Ali Khan was in fact assumed while that expedition was planned and in progress, though no grounds for such an assumption are given, and its erroneous nature seems to be admitted. For while it is said that "emissaries of the Ameer of Cabul were at one time suspected of encouraging the coalition and the hostility of the tribes", we are told in the same sentence that the Ameer "has sent troops against the Momund Chief, and taken steps to coerce his refractory father-in-law."‡

In September 1863, when the orders for the Sitana expedition had been given, Lord Elgin wrote to the Secretary of State, "I wish by a sudden and vigorous blow to check this trouble on our frontier while it is in a nascent condition."

"The Afghans in their distracted state might furnish sympathisers; we should be invited to interfere in their

* *Letters and Journals*, p. 452.

† *Ante*, p. 8.

‡ *Papers, Late Disturbances on the North-West Frontier* (No. 158 of 1864), p. 124.

internal affairs, in order to oppose those among them who were abetting our Mohammedan adversaries.”*

Three months, therefore, after receiving from Sher Ali Khan the news of his peaceful and undisputed accession, the Viceroy of India had made no response to the Ameer's friendly overtures, except by a menacing display of force on his frontier, and was expressing some anxiety as to Afghan “sympathisers” “abetting our Mohammedan adversaries.”

And if we look back to the previous year, when Dost Mohammed was entering on his final and victorious campaign, and observe the Viceroy giving “a good deal of consideration”, as to how he can “with the least risk of getting this Government into trouble, put a spoke into the Dost's wheel in his progress towards Herat”,† it can hardly be doubted that, like several other Viceroys in their first year, he had fallen under the bewildering spell of strange terms and details, and had allowed himself to be fettered by the evil spirit of the Calcutta Foreign Office, embodied in its best and highest form by Colonel Durand, who accompanied him everywhere. That evil spirit of haughty aversion to all inherent energy, to every natural effort, to every social and spiritual force of purely Eastern origin and growth, pervades and prompts more or less every department of our Indian administration, is pre-eminent in virulence at Calcutta, and characterised in a very marked degree the political career of the late Sir Henry Durand. The long list of errors committed by this respectable officer during twenty years' employment in civil and diplomatic duties,—always arising from the same hard sectarian prejudices,—culminated in the persistent importunity, which barely failed, with which he sought the confiscation of Dhar and the extinction of the dynasty and State of Mysore.

Whether the Ameer and the British Empire were indebted for the restoration of friendly intercourse to the

* *Letters and Journals*, p. 454.

† To Sir Charles Wood, August 9th, 1862, *Letters and Journals*.

sound judgment of Sir William Denison, or to the resumption of control by the Members of Council, from whom the Foreign Secretary, Colonel Durand, had been separated during his tour with Lord Elgin, cannot be at present ascertained. It is abundantly clear, however, that our deferred recognition of 8th December, 1863, did not, and could not, really produce the effect in strengthening the Ameer's power, that it was probably intended by Sir William Denison to produce.* The happy moment was past. The recognition that might have conveyed an expression of respect for the last wishes of Dost Mohammed, and a word of congratulation and good counsel for his successor, now carried with it an air of scorn for the father's memory, a personal insult for the son, an effectual incentive for his rivals and enemies.

Sher Ali Khan was recognised by our Government, with a doubt implied,—if not expressed,—as to the superiority of his claim, in December 1863, six months after his installation. Early in 1864 his elder half-brother, Mohammed Afzul Khan, who, as the *Friend of India* tells us, had remained "quiet" till then, displayed the first signs of disaffection, as if he now felt himself let loose.

In January 1864, one month after the recognition of Sher Ali Khan, and just about the time when Afzul Khan was beginning to show his teeth, Sir John Lawrence arrived at Calcutta, and assumed the office of Viceroy of India.

The first battle of the civil war, destined to last, with but little intermission, for four years and a half, was fought between the Ameer Sher Ali Khan and his half-brother Afzul Khan in June 1864, when the latter was defeated. Immediately after this battle, Afzul Khan made a show of submission to his brother's legitimate supremacy, and a reconciliation between them took place. Within a very short time, however, his son, Abd-oor-

* "But now," said the *Friend of India*, "that his opponents, Azim Khan and Afzul Khan, are quiet, however personally discontented, our Government has done only what is just and politic, in strengthening his power by formal recognition." *Ante*, p. 10.

Rahaman, having suddenly fled to Bokhara, Afzul Khan was arrested by the Ameer's orders, and kept for a short time in close confinement. It is some slight indication of the progress of more humane views, that, notwithstanding advice strongly urged on the Ameer, and numerous precedents in the Afghan annals of the last half-century, Afzul Khan was neither put to death nor deprived of sight. His imprisonment was very soon mitigated into a sort of honourable retirement in the Ameer's household, where he was treated with respect and indulgence, and, though constantly attended and watched, allowed to take exercise on horseback.

It deserves, also, to be recorded to the credit of Sher Ali Khan, that he had previously treated his brother Azim Khan, "our friend," and perhaps the most formidable of his rivals, with clemency and generous confidence, although Azim Khan had fully betrayed his ambitious designs, and had fallen into the Ameer's power. In August 1863, as the *Edinburgh Reviewer* tells us, Sher Ali by a rapid march,

"Compelled Azim Khan, who was hardly prepared for such prompt action, to tender a formal submission. The two brothers then embraced: Azim Khan swore fealty to the Ameer, and in return obtained a confirmation of all the dignities and emoluments he had enjoyed during the late reign."*

In April 1864, Azim Khan again broke out in rebellion, and was again overpowered by the Ameer. In the words of the *Edinburgh Reviewer*,

"Azim Khan's venture utterly collapsed. Abandoned by his troops, Azim Khan on May 16th, 1864, fled for refuge into British territory, and became a pensioner of Sir John Lawrence at Rawul Pindee."†

The *Punjab Administration Report* for 1863-4 says that Azim Khan was "forced to take refuge in British territory, where he met with a private but honourable reception, due to one who, during the worst times of the mutiny, had discouraged any violation of it by the Afghans."‡

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 19.

† *Ibid.*, p. 20.

‡ *Punjab Report*, 1863-64 (printed at Calcutta), p. 77.

Afzul Khan's arrest, amply justified by his previous conduct and by subsequent events, was, of course, denounced by his adherents as an act of treachery on the part of the Ameer Sher Ali. All the hostile elements exploded in rapid succession. In a battle before Candahar, fought in June 1865, the Ameer's eldest son, Mohammed Ali, a young man of great promise, was killed. This was a terrible blow to Sher Ali Khan. For many months he remained at Candahar in a state of despondent apathy, almost amounting to melancholy madness, while his enemies were gathering strength from all quarters. His brother Azim Khan, "our friend,"* returned from his pensioned refuge on British territory,—only seventy miles from the Afghan frontier,—and joined his nephew, Abdooor-Rahman, son of the imprisoned Afzul Khan, with all the troops he could muster. The united forces of uncle and nephew marched upon Cabul, and occupied the place without much difficulty in February 1866. The loss of his capital roused Sher Ali from his gloomy lethargy. He took the field once more,—his brother Afzul Khan accompanying the camp under the usual restraint,—but was completely defeated by his brother, Azim Khan, on the 10th of May, 1866, and compelled to retreat upon Candahar. The Chiefs in whose charge Afzul Khan had been placed by the Ameer, went over with their troops to the enemy. The victors re-entered Cabul in triumph, and proclaimed the released Afzul Khan Ameer of Afghanistan.

Henceforth, up to October 1868, when Sir John Lawrence sent a congratulatory answer to the letter from Sher Ali Khan announcing his decisive victory near Ghuznee and re-occupation of Cabul, our Government seems to have been betrayed into a series of errors, partly from trusting to false information, partly from imperfect appreciation of the undisputed facts before it, but chiefly from the defective moral basis on which its policy was founded.

Let it be granted for the present, that at the period of Dost Mohammed's death, it was neither just nor expedient

* *Ante*, p. 8.

for us to attempt any active interference in the affairs of Afghanistan. What ought to have been our policy?

We were still bound to the Afghan State by the obligations of the Treaty of 1855, under which, as already explained,* the British Government had explicitly acknowledged the right of the reigning Ameer to nominate his own successor. This prerogative, familiar and acceptable to Mussulman nations, was obviously the most effective process for securing a peaceful transfer of power, and for preventing the disintegration of the united Afghan Provinces. The nomination of Sher Ali Khan was formally communicated to our Government. Yet when the time came for giving effect to this nomination, instead of raising our voice promptly and emphatically in its favour, our voice was so late and our language so uncertain, as to excite strange rumours of our real wishes and intentions. Instead of upholding the wholesome prerogative which we had previously helped to establish, and which offered the only security for peace and good order, we contrived to unsettle everything, and to give the signal for war.

For when it was seen that the great British Government, which had made treaties with the Ameer Dost Mohammed and "his heirs", refused its moral support to the Ameer Sher Ali Khan, and refrained from friendly intercourse with him, the natural assumption was that we would have preferred, and should still prefer, another member of the family. This may or may not have been,—I am inclined to think it was,—a true assumption, but at any rate it was irresistible, not only in the bazars of Afghanistan, but in the streets of Calcutta. It was proclaimed by the press of India. Azim Khan was not called "our friend" by mere guess, without some leakage of sayings and doings in the Council Chamber and the Foreign Office.

Let us, however, take a fresh departure,—set down our dilatory recognition as an unfortunate accident,—and observe what was the course of our Government after the arrival of Sir John Lawrence at Calcutta, when Sher Ali's troubles had commenced.

Sher Ali Khan, publicly chosen by the Ameer Dost Mo-

* *Ante*, p. 6.

hammered, and formally announced to our Government as heir and successor to the State, had to wait, as we have seen, six months before his position was recognised. His brother, Afzul Khan, raised from captivity to the throne, had only to wait six weeks to be recognised as "Walee of Cabul."

On May 21st, 1866, Afzul Khan was installed at Cabul, after the events already described. On July 11th, when the Ameer Sher Ali Khan had reigned for three years, and while he still, in Sir John Lawrence's own words, "retained his authority and power over a large portion of Afghanistan," still "ruled in Candahar and in Herat," the British Viceroy addressed his rival as "Walee of Cabul", in a letter which breathes in every line what may be termed the spirit of partition.

The entire letter, which I extract from the demi-official article in the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1867, runs as follows :—

"To His Highness, Sirdar MOHAMMED AFZUL KHAN, Walee of Cabul, dated Simla, 11th July, 1866.

"I have received your Highness's friendly letter, giving an account of late events in Afghanistan. It has been to me a source of sincere sorrow that misfortunes such as your Highness describes have befallen the great house of the Barukzyes, and that calamities so heavy and protracted have been experienced by the people. It was, and still continues to be, the hearty desire of the British Government that the Afghan nation should remain under the strong and united rule of the Barukzye family, and that this family, endowed by the Creator of the world with wisdom to be at peace among themselves, should be respected both in their own country and by surrounding nations. Wherefore it has been a source of distress and anxiety of mind to me that strife and division have arisen among the members of your Highness's family.

"My friend! your Highness alludes to the friendship which existed between your Highness's renowned father and the British Government, and your Highness says that from this Government your Highness expects similar treatment. It is the earnest wish of the British Government that that friendship should be perpetuated. But while I am desirous that the alliance between the two Governments should be firm and lasting, it is incumbent on me to tell your Highness that it would be inconsistent with the fame and reputation of the British Government to break off its alliance with

Ameer Sher Ali Khan, who has given to it no offence, so long as he retains his authority and power over a large portion of Afghanistan. That Ameer still rules in Candahar and in Herat.

"My friend! the relations of this Government are with the actual rulers of Afghanistan. If your Highness is able to consolidate your Highness's power in Cabul, and is sincerely desirous of being a friend and ally of the British Government, I shall be ready to accept your Highness as such; but I cannot break the engagements with Ameer Sher Ali Khan, and I must continue to treat him as the ruler of that portion of Afghanistan over which he retains control. Sincerity and fair dealing induce me to write thus plainly and openly to your Highness."†

It may be that our Government really intended in this letter of July 11th, 1866, to hold the balance evenly, with, perhaps, as claimed for it by the *Edinburgh Reviewer*, some "preference" for the Ameer Sher Ali, as having been recognised first. If we may trust the English version of the letter, the secondary title "Sirdar" is prefixed to Afzul Khan's name, while that of "Ameer" is still given to Sher Ali. On Sir John Lawrence's principle, avowed in this letter, Sher Ali Khan could hardly be deposed by us from his father's rank and title, to which he had succeeded, "so long as he retained his authority and power over a large portion of Afghanistan." Even this principle, however, was not observed after Sher Ali Khan's next defeat. In February 1867, Afzul Khan was greeted by the British Viceroy as "Ameer"; and on his death in October 1867, the same title was conferred upon his brother Azim Khan, "our friend," who still retained possession of the capital city.

But our Government, whatever its intention may have been, did not hold the balance evenly, nor was its recognition of Afzul Khan deferred or imperfect, when the Viceroy addressed him as "Walee of Cabul". That was no mere honorary distinction. It was the term employed in our treaties with his father, Dost Mohammed. Afzul Khan had been carried by a rush to the capital of the Kingdom, as the result of a single victory. He had thus got possession of the palace and the mint, the archives and insignia of state, and was enabled to set

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 33.

up the semblance of central and supreme authority. This may have imposed on the vulgar, and probably brought recruits and resources to the insurgent cause. But it ought not to have imposed on the Imperial Government of India. With whatever reservations our Government may have cloaked their recognition, Afzul Khan was hailed by them as "Walee of Cabul," within six weeks of his reappearance on the scene in that newly assumed character. They cared not for his qualifications or claims for the part; it was enough for them that he had possession of the stage.

And after all, what did the reservations of this letter amount to? Simply to a refusal "to break off the alliance with the Ameer Sher Ali Khan," "so long as he retains his authority and power over a large portion of Afghanistan." "My friend," says the British Viceroy, "the relations of this Government are with the actual rulers of Afghanistan. *If your Highness is able to consolidate your power in Cabul, and is sincerely desirous of being a friend and ally of the British Government, I shall be ready to accept your Highness as such.*"

In plain terms :—Go in and win! If Afzul Khan and his followers took this letter as a broad hint that they must follow up their first success, and finish their adversary, so as to furnish the British Government with a decent excuse "*to break off its alliance with the Ameer Sher Ali Khan,*" it was the only natural conclusion for them to draw. What a tone, what an attitude for a great Government like ours to assume! Called by its vast responsibilities and interests as the Imperial Power of India, to arbitrate between contending parties, and appealed to from both sides, it bids them fight it out.

Meanwhile, until Afzul Khan could get the better of his brother, and "consolidate his power in Cabul," the British Viceroy recognised him as "Walee" or Ruler "of Cabul,"—the very title that his father, Dost Mohammed, had assumed in his treaties with the British Government.

The Viceroy says in his letter :—"I cannot break the existing engagements with Ameer Sher Ali Khan, and I must continue to treat him as the ruler of that portion of

Afghanistan over which he retains control." I am not aware that there were then any other "existing engagements" with Ameer Sher Ali Khan except the Treaty of 1855, concluded for "his Highness Ameer Dost Mohammed Khan, Walee of Cabul and of those countries of Afghanistan now in his possession", by Gholam Hyder, "in person on his own account as heir apparent."* Sher Ali had, first, succeeded to the position of "heir apparent", with the knowledge and assent of our Government, and, secondly, to the position of "Walee of Cabul and of those countries of Afghanistan now in his possession." How then could we profess a desire not to "break existing engagements", when on the first reverse of our ally, in the crisis of a civil war, we recognised his rival as Walee of Cabul, and treated the Ameer himself only as Lord of what he stood on—"as the ruler of that portion of Afghanistan over which he retains control"?

When the Viceroy's letter was written, the Ameer Sher Ali Khan retained control not merely over "a large portion", but over by far the larger portion of Afghanistan. According to the *Edinburgh Reviewer*, the Ameer was then in possession of "the districts of Khelat-i-Ghilzye, Candahar, Ghirishk, Furrah, and Herat", while "Fyz Mohammed was in open insurrection" in his favour, "at Tukhtapool" in Balkh, and his rival, Afzul Khan, held "nothing but Cabul and Ghuznee",† and had only held these for six weeks. Yet this was the time chosen, with strange alacrity, by the British Viceroy, for addressing Afzul Khan in the terms prescribed by the Treaty of 1855, as "Walee of Cabul".

Nor was the more high-sounding title withheld very long. The *Punjaub Administrative Report* for 1866-7, informs us that when Afzul Khan announced the defeat of the Ameer Sher Ali on the 17th January, 1867, near Khelat-i-Ghilzye, a second letter was addressed to him by Sir John Lawrence, in which the Viceroy congratulated "His Highness the Ameer Mohammed Afzul Khan, Walee of Cabul and Candahar," upon "an event which

* *Ante*, p. 6.

† *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, pp. 30, 31, 33.

seemed likely to bring about peace, and the establishment of a strong government.”*

This second letter was dated February 25th, 1867. Mr. Wyllie, referring to this document in his *Fortnightly Review* article, did not give the exact tenour of these congratulations, but said that they “were tempered with a regret, and even a preference for his rival, so nakedly declared, that the records of diplomacy might be searched in vain for a parallel.” He then quotes what he calls “the most important clauses” of the letter, in which—strange to say!—we may “search in vain” for any expression of “regret” or of “preference.” On the contrary, the Viceroy thus emphatically and apologetically repudiates any leaning towards Sher Ali Khan:—

“My friend! The British Government has hitherto maintained a strict neutrality between the contending parties in Afghanistan. Rumours, I am told, have reached the Cabul Durbar of assistance having been granted by me to Ameer Sher Ali Khan. I take this opportunity to request your Highness not to believe such idle tales. Neither men, nor arms, nor money, nor assistance of any kind, have ever been supplied by my Government to Ameer Sher Ali Khan. Your Highness and he, both equally unaided by me, have fought out the battle, each upon your own resources. I purpose to continue the same policy for the future.”†

In plain terms once more:—Go in and win!

A belief has been already expressed in these pages that our Government really supposed, when the former letter of 11th July 1866, was written, that it was holding the balance evenly between the contending parties. Credit may, perhaps, be claimed on its behalf;—notwithstanding the natural purport of the words which I have pointed out,—for not having intended to stir up more strife, or to encourage Afzul Khan to pursue the advantage he had gained, in order to supply us with a pretext for “breaking off the alliance” with Sher Ali Khan. So much credit may be given, but only on the ground originally taken up by me, that both letters breathe the spirit of partition. Sir John Lawrence’s only idea of acting as peacemaker was

* *Punjab Report*, 1866-7 (printed at Lahore), par. 299, p. 95.

† *Fortnightly Review*, December 1869, pp. 602, 603.

that of suggesting an amicable division of territory among the rival brothers. The policy of his administration was that of looking on, and gently aiding, whenever a chance offered itself, in some such arrangement as that proposed in the following passage from the Calcutta demi-official pamphlet :—

“For ourselves it has been our opinion that the progress of the war might have been more than once averted by the partition of Afghanistan between two or more of the rival Chiefs, whilst the British Government assumed the position of the Paramount Power.”*

This was a policy, in my humble opinion, neither upright, nor dignified, nor prudent. What our policy ought to have been, with due regard both for our own interests and for our treaty engagements with the Afghan State, seems plain enough.

We had formally recognised the Ameer as successor to his father, and therefore,—under the Treaty of 1855, made with Dost Mohammed and “his heirs”—as “Walee” (Ruler) “of Cabool and of those countries of Afghanistan now in his possession;” and we had bound ourselves “never to interfere in those territories.”† So long, therefore, as any of those countries were in his possession, the British Government ought not to have recognised any other Ruler. That question ought never to have been raised by anything short of his death or utter dispossession. It was not consistent with good faith towards the acknowledged head of a friendly State to aggravate its distractions or to aid in its dismemberment. Such a course was equally inconsistent with an enlightened regard for our Imperial interests. Such a course was, however, adopted by the British authorities in India.

Afzul Khan died in October 1867, and his brother, Azim Khan, “our friend”, was recognised by our Government as Ameer, not only without a moment’s hesitation or delay, but with a remarkable demonstration of renewed confidence. The *Punjab Report* for 1867-8 states that “his succession was recognised by the British Government,

* *Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence*, Calcutta, 1869, p. 11.

† *Appendix A*.

and in December the Agent of the British Government, who had been hitherto detained at Peshawur pending the civil wars following on the death of Dost Mohammed, again took up his residence at Cabul.* The *Punjab Report* does not, however, tell us that the Viceroy's letter, dated November 13th, 1867, recognising Azim Khan as Ameer of Cabul, was despatched without that Prince having even announced the fact of his brother's death or of his own accession, that he never made any reply to these volunteered congratulations, and that he treated the British Agent with marked incivility. Mr. Wyllie, however, in the *Fortnightly Review* article of December 1869, says that before the death of Afzul Khan, Azim Khan, the real ruler, "had made a habit in the Cabul Durbar of railing against the British Government in a strain of unbridled insolence", indulging on one occasion in "a furious tirade against English ingratitude and selfishness", and even "doing his best by actual deeds to stir up against us, in an organised league of holy war, the numerous predatory and fanatical tribes whose mountain fastnesses overhang our North West frontier."† On his brother's death, however, "he felt", Mr. Wyllie says, that he "ought to be recognised by the British Government, and the sooner the better. Accordingly", continues the demi-official apologist, "he took early occasion to hint in roundabout fashion to our Moonshee that he expected from the Governor-General some expression of condolence for the death of his brother, Ameer Afzul."‡ He got even more than he expected,—not merely condolences and compliments, but the immediate recognition of his title, and the restoration of a British Agent at his Court. The Calcutta delusion as to Azim Khan being "our friend" at bottom, was evidently not yet extinct. Mr. Wyllie admits that "etiquette undoubtedly required Azim Khan himself to have made the first move; he ought to have claimed British recognition by a special letter to the Viceroy, formally announcing his installation." But he pleads, "Sir John Lawrence knew

* *Punjab Report*, 1867-8, par. 45, p. 14.

† *Fortnightly Review*, December 1869, pp. 592, 593.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 611.

for a fact that the submission to Azim Khan had been universal."* Mr. Wyllie, nevertheless, in another part of the same article, explains that whatever "submission" there was in Cabul to Azim Khan's usurpation was only enforced by "a reign of terror", by "the penalty of death administered to batches", and by filling the prisons with the adherents of the Ameer Sher Ali.† In a subsequent essay he acknowledges that the return of Sher Ali to Cabul was "a god-send" to its inhabitants, as a relief from "the frightful tyranny of Azim Khan.‡ No testimony could more effectually prove the blindness and incapacity of the Calcutta Foreign Office. At the time of Afzul Khan's death the cause of Sher Ali was evidently considered hopeless by the Government of India. In the Bombay Administration Report for 1867-8—every word in which regarding a political subject of such importance must have merely echoed the instructions of Calcutta,—after the statement that "by the death of Afzul Khan, Azim Khan has become Walee or Ruler of Cabul", Sher Ali Khan is termed "the Ex-Ameer."§

During the long struggle of four years and a half, Sher Ali Khan sued frequently, but in vain, for assistance or support, in any shape, from the British Government. Setting aside for the moment all consideration of his rights and of our treaty obligations, it ought to have been as clear as day, at a very early period in the contest, that the Ameer was fighting our battle, that his cause was more popular than that of his rivals in all the provinces of Afghanistan, and that he alone could hold the country as a compact State.

At almost every important crisis in the civil war, even after their most signal successes, Sher Ali Khan's opponents made overtures to him for peace,—i. e. for a partition of territory,—but the Ameer firmly refused all terms except those of entire submission to his authority as Sovereign of all his father's dominions. || Even this significant

* *Fortnightly Review*, December 1869, p. 612.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 593, 594.

‡ *Ibid.*, March 1870, p. 282.

§ *Administration Report of the Bombay Government*, 1867-8, p. 108.

|| See Allen's *Indian Mail*, November 22nd, 1866; and *Punjab*

fact could not open the eyes of our representatives at Calcutta.

The current newspaper reports unanimously testify to the prevailing unpopularity of Sher Ali Khan's opponents, and prove that their temporary and unstable ascendancy was solely due to the superior generalship in the field of Azim Khan and his nephew, Abd-oor-Rahman, and to the help which the latter received from his father-in-law, the Ameer* of Bokhara.* All this is pretty well epitomised in the Calcutta pamphlet, eulogising Sir John Lawrence's administration, evidently compiled from authentic sources, which we have already quoted. The writer thus describes the state of affairs while Afzul Khan was in power at Cabul, between June 1866 and October 1867:—

“Meantime the grossest oppression characterised the new administration. Money was required, and little scruple was displayed in wringing it out of the people of Cabul. Caravans were stopped and plundered until trade was virtually at an end; and loans and contributions were exacted. At the same time, disaffection at Cabul was put down with a high hand by Mahomed Azim Khan.”

“The oppressed people of Cabul now began to yearn for the return of Shere Ali Khan from Candahar, in the hope that he would redress their wrongs.”†

The *Edinburgh Reviewer*, speaking of the same period, says;—“All power centred in the hands of Azim Khan, who ruled with a tight hand, feared by many and loved by none.”‡

And referring to the period between October 1867 and August 1868, when Azim Khan, recognised as Ameer by our Government on the death of his brother Afzul Khan, held possession of Cabul, the Calcutta writer says:—

Administration Report, for 1866-7, par. 297, p. 95. Mr. Wyllie, also, says that in November 1866, “messengers were sent” from Afzul Khan and Azim Khan “to Sher Ali, proposing peace on terms of a partition of the country,—Sher Ali to retain Candahar and Herat, and the confederates to keep Cabul with Balkh added.”—*Fortnightly Review*, December 1869, p. 594.

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, pp. 21, 22.

† *Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence*, Calcutta, 1869, p. 8.

‡ *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 31.

"While Shere Ali Khan was compelled to fly to Herat, his cause was popular with the Chiefs of Balkh."

"In March 1868, Shere Ali Khan completed his preparations at Herat for a renewal of the war. The new Ameer" (Azim Khan) "was most unpopular at Cabul and Candahar."*

And the *Edinburgh* Reviewer tells us that when Afzul Khan had been installed at Cabul, after the signal defeat of Sher Ali Khan in May 1866, the Ameer "made good his retreat upon Candahar", where "he was well received by the inhabitants." He adds:—"Half the Chiefs in Cabul continued in secret correspondence with him."†

The writer of the Calcutta pamphlet again, speaking of the great victory of Azim Khan over the Ameer Sher Ali in January 1867, known as the battle of Khelat-i-Ghilzye, says:—

"The fortunes of Shere Ali Khan were now at their lowest ebb. But as yet he did not despair. He was still in possession of Herat; and an army in Balkh, under Faiz Mahomed Khan, had declared in his favour."‡

Surely our Government must have been fully informed of these remarkable phenomena: surely they ought to have been able to interpret their meaning. Above all, they ought not to have overlooked the force of one most important fact, that in the midst of all his difficulties Sher Ali Khan never lost Herat, and, except for a few months, maintained his hold upon Balkh. Throughout the contest, his resources in men and money were chiefly recruited in these Provinces.

For more than forty years Herat had been separated from Cabul, until regained by Dost Mohammed. Herat, as an isolated Principality, would always lie at the mercy of some greater power. All the treaties in existence could not prevent the city of Herat—rightly called "the Key of India",—with more or less of the surrounding districts, from being annexed to Persia, with or without Russian help, at the first convenient provocation, if Great Britain were hindered by other immediate difficulties from employ-

* *Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence*, Calcutta, 1869, p. 10.

† *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 30.

‡ *Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence*, pp. 8, 9.

ing effectual measures of direct resistance or coercion. If Herat were once fairly incorporated with the Persian monarchy, and a Russian Consulate established there, it would not be so easy to detach it again as it might have been to defend it.

The town of Balkh, now called Tukhtapool, is not twenty-five miles from the river Oxus, and hardly two hundred miles from what is now the Russian city of Samarcand. The Province, from the year 1820 until it was reconquered by Dost Mohammed in 1850, formed part of the Kingdom of Bokhara. The Ameer of Bokhara is now a vassal of Russia. If Balkh were a petty Principality, independent of Cabul, or if it formed part of a distracted and divided Afghanistan, the pretensions of Bokhara to its former dependency would very soon be revived.

It is only as constituent Provinces of a strong Afghan State, with its chief resources at Cabul and Candahar, that Balkh and Herat, Koondooz and Badakhshan, can be preserved intact from the encroachments and aggressions of their neighbours. It is only while their political connection with Cabul and Candahar continues, that Great Britain can exert its influence, for protection or tutelage, over those outworks of its Indian Empire. It is only by virtue of the Treaty of 1855 with the Ameer Dost Mohammed Khan and his "heirs", that Great Britain has any diplomatic intercourse or reciprocal engagements with the Walee or Ruler of Cabul. Under this Treaty there was to be "perpetual peace and friendship" between the British Government and the Walee of Cabul; and the latter undertook "to be the friend of the friends and the enemy of the enemies of the former.*"

Though so many important steps had been taken between 1855 and 1863 towards fully realising our main object of a strong and united Afghanistan, amenable to British influence,—Dost Mohammed having reduced the more distant provinces of Balkh, Koondooz, and Herat to obedience; Lords Dalhousie and Canning having established relations of defensive and offensive alliance with the Walee of Cabul,—the Government of Sir John Law-

* *Appendix A.*

rence, between 1864 and 1869, would have thrown these great advantages to the winds. At the supreme crisis of the civil war, when both parties had appealed for our recognition, the Government of India positively suggested and encouraged a re-partition of the State, that would have destroyed British influence, that would have broken up Afghanistan into several petty Principalities, each one powerless by itself, at enmity with the others, and sooner or later dependent for mere existence on the patronage of our busy competitors.

Sher Ali Khan himself has saved us for the time from utter discomfiture, from a miserable retrogression. Alone he did it. If the Afghan Provinces are still united, as he received them from the wise and vigorous rule of his father; if British influence in Central Asia still subsists at all; if the clue of our Imperial policy, though dropped, can still be recovered; no servant of Great Britain, at home or abroad, appears to deserve any credit whatever for this precious and fortunate reprieve. We owe it to Sher Ali Khan.

Before his second installation at Cabul in September 1868, and the decisive victory near Ghuznee over the forces of his brother, Azim Khan, in December of that year, the Ameer Sher Ali owed us nothing. Then our Government, roused at last to some sense of its lost opportunities, offered him some little assistance in money and warlike stores. He owed us nothing up to the date of that offer. On the contrary, but for our ambiguous behaviour, the intrigues and insurrections of his brothers—if they had ever been set on foot—would have been much less formidable.

The delay in recognising Sher Ali Khan's accession may be charitably imputed by some people, though not by me, to an oversight or mishap. Short as was the delay in recognising Afzul Khan, it was yet a deliberate act on the part of our Government. We incited the Ameer's rivals by delaying to recognise his title, and we recognised his rivals without any title at all.

Those who were allowed to guide Imperial affairs at Calcutta, and whose advice was trusted in London, be-

tween 1864 and 1869, failed utterly to master the situation. To take the best view of their policy, it was no policy at all, but mere bewilderment,—as if they had decided to look on, and see who would win. To take the worst view of it,—and one, I believe, nearer the truth—it was a policy hostile to Sher Ali, but covertly hostile,—at first inclined towards Azim Khan, “our friend,” as a candidate for power; more decidedly afterwards, in favour of partition.*

A glimpse at the foregone conclusions on this point may be obtained from vol. ii of the *Collection of Treaties*, compiled by Mr. C. U. Aitchison, then Under Secretary (now Secretary) of the Foreign Department, and published at Calcutta by authority in January, 1863, six months before Dost Mohammed’s death, while Colonel (afterwards Sir Henry) Durand was Secretary to Government. We read as follows in the preliminary remarks to the Treaties with Afghanistan :—

“The recent invasion of the Cabul dominions from Herat, resulting in the siege of that town by the Ameer, has excited much speculation as to the future of Cabul. *There seems little doubt that the Kingdom is only kept from dismemberment by the personal influence of the Ameer, who is now of great age.*”*

“Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought.”

There would have been no danger of “dismemberment”, if the British Government had known how to do its duty to itself and to its neighbour, and had determined to do it,—if it had encouraged the reign of Law, instead of relying upon “personal influence.” But petty counsels prevailed at the most critical moment. Imperial traditions were forgotten; the professional policy of Calcutta came into play unchecked. Good faith and good will towards the slowly forming State of Afghanistan were wanting, because the lawful Ruler was understood to have a will of his own. Without avowing our preference, a negative support might be given to the pretender, whose personal influence was imagined to be favourable to us, by simply withholding for a time our recognition of the regular succession. Sir John Lawrence, though not responsible for this

* *Collection of Treaties*, vol. ii, p. 427.

first error, did nothing to rectify it. On the contrary, he recognised the first pretender who contrived to seize on the capital, and thus converted the negative support of disorder and confusion into positive support.

The official apology in the *Edinburgh Review*, was written about the end of 1866, when symptoms of the Calcutta policy having broken down were beginning to raise unpleasant remarks. The false information and false inferences on which it was founded were exploding in all directions. The Ameer Sher Ali was proving himself to be neither so weak nor so unpopular as he had been represented. Afzul Khan, recognised in July as Walee of Cabul, was not getting on at all. In six months he had made no progress, notwithstanding the Viceroy's exhortations, in "*consolidating his power in Cabul*," or in driving Sher Ali Khan from "*a large portion of Afghanistan*." The British Government were still unable to "*break off its alliance with Ameer Sher Ali Khan, who had given it no offence*."* The Reviewer writes:—

"At Cabul nothing of any importance occurred after the installation of the rival Ameer, Afzul Khan. But the prospects of the party have sensibly deteriorated in the interval. They hold nothing now but Cabul and Ghuznee."†

To make out a good story for Sir John Lawrence's Government, under these circumstances, was no easy matter. The Reviewer has done his best. He evidently anticipated the ultimate success of the Ameer's cause, and is dimly conscious of the worst point in the case,—the hasty recognition of Afzul Khan. Carried away, however, by loyal admiration for the distinguished person whom he has undertaken to defend, and by natural solicitude for the credit of his own Department, he takes the bull by the horns, declares that the British Government has been faithful to Sher Ali, and "*has given no countenance*" to Afzul Khan. He speaks of the "*pertinacious efforts of Azim Khan to lure us from our fidelity to the Ameer Sher Ali's cause*." He assures us that "*the relations of the Ameer Sher Ali remain on the old footing of mutual trust*

* *Ante*, p. 23, 24.

† *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 31

and good-will.”* He characterises the Viceroy’s letter of the 11th of July, 1866, as “the frank avowal of a preference for the Ameer Sher Ali.”† “Above all,” he says, “the reputation of being the ally of the British Government was a tower of strength to Sher Ali Khan—

“For though, since the commencement of the strife, innumerable proofs have been given of our determination to let the Afghans fight out their own battles without the grant of a single musket or rupee to one side or the other, Sir John Lawrence has taken no less pains to let it be known throughout the length and breadth of Afghanistan that England does not depart lightly from her engagements, and that no pretender can hope for any countenance from her, so long as the Prince whom she has once recognised as Sovereign retains any material hold upon the country.”‡

He protests in vain : his own scrupulously accurate narrative, and the Viceroy’s letters, contradict him.

In order to maintain our condemnation of the policy pursued at Calcutta in 1864 and 1866, it is not at all necessary to insist that the Ameer ought to have been supplied at first with muskets or rupees. If the moral support that was due to a friendly Sovereign had been extended to Sher Ali at the outset of his troubles ; if no countenance had been given to the pretenders, Afzul and Azim Khan ; the material help that seems to all India and Central Asia to have been at last extorted from us, would probably have never been required. Money is the great want of the Afghan State. Every one, great and small, in that poor country, knew what effective aid we could give to its lawful Ruler, without moving a single battalion,—such as we had given to Dost Mohammed in 1857, such as we have now given, at the eleventh hour, to Sher Ali Khan. If the British Viceroy had taken his stand on the line and rule of succession instituted by Dost Mohammed, approved by our Government, and recorded in the Treaty of 1855,—if he had declared that he would deal with no one but the Ameer Sher Ali, on the ground of his absolute right, and had taken suitable means to make this declaration public, it would have found its way to the heart and reason of all Afghanistan. Conspiracy and rivalry would

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 31. See Appendix B.

† *Ibid.*, p. 34.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 31.

have been paralysed. A few firm and generous words would have done the work of armies.

Nor let anyone cavil at my use of the term "absolute right." It would, indeed, be hypocrisy for us to assert the divine right of Kings. It would, on the other hand, be useless pedantry for the most advanced Liberal among us to preach popular rights in the East. I uphold the absolute right of Sher Ali Khan under his father's nomination, simply as the germ of a law of succession, as something that ought to have been upheld until it could be replaced. The word "right" expresses ideas that are understood by the people of Afghanistan; it represents to them both a moral truth and a legal principle. They may attach more importance to the patriarchal investiture of Sher Ali Khan with the turban of sovereignty by his dying father's hands, in the presence of all his brothers, as a fact of sacramental efficacy, than to the peaceful transmission of power, as a political object; but they are not incapable of comprehending the latter idea, if judiciously pressed on their notice in combination with the former. It was a lesson they were ready to learn.

This was a golden opportunity for a great civilised Power, aspiring to the leadership of Asia, at once to promote peace and order, and to strengthen its own moral influence. We had not been blameless towards Afghanistan, and might now have made some reparation. The country had been torn and ravaged with disputed successions for more than fifty years. We might have crushed another in the egg. Instead of doing so, we fomented and fostered it.

Two practical lessons appear to be taught by the signal failure of our policy under Sir John Lawrence's Viceroyalty—first, that however much the administration of all India may be controlled in Calcutta, the Empire must be governed in London; secondly, that an eminent public functionary is not necessarily a great statesman. All the probabilities, precedents and presumptions are against him. A life passed in mastering and checking executive details, on however grand a scale,—a career, however distinguished, in every successive rank of an official hierarchy,—offers the worst possible introduction to the

Viceregal chair of state. The most able and experienced member of our permanent Civil Service would hardly shine as Prime Minister.

In purely Imperial matters we must do our statesmanship at home, and our plans must be constructed on British principles. We must beware of official experts. Respect their achievements; chronicle their information; distrust their conclusions. These are too frequently dictated by the generous restlessness of special and singular qualifications, by a noble ardour for work and glory. The measures they recommend, whether of masterly interference or of masterly inaction, are too often tainted, also, by a certain touch of contempt and antipathy for the alien races whom they may affect so deeply, to which we are less liable in the latitude of London.

Even as far back as 1838, we should never have thought, on any calculation of profit or security for ourselves, of forcing a twice expelled King upon the most insignificant State of Europe. Nor would Lord Palmerston and Sir John Hobhouse have directed such an enterprise against Afghanistan, unless it had been previously devised and concocted in Calcutta, unless they had been assured by the Indian Executive of its advisability and practicability. The Court of Directors might, indeed, most reasonably complain that they were not consulted as to the invasion of 1839, and declare that they totally disapproved of it. The East India Company may be fully absolved; but the Indian Government who planned the expedition, and the Indian Services, who hailed it with enthusiasm, cannot escape their share of the blame.

Lord Auckland, the Governor-General of those days, not a very strong man at his best, had been three years in India, and was completely subject to the influence of three clever Bengal Civilians, the Foreign Secretary and his Assistant, and his own Private Secretary.*

There is so much danger of even the best possible Viceroy succumbing more or less to the official atmosphere amidst which he lives and works, that far from giving him credit for greater experience, the Imperial Government

* Kaye's *War in Afghanistan*, 1857, vol. i, pp. 312, 315.

ought to tighten its vigilant supervision and control, rather than relax them, after every additional year of Viceregal residence in India.

During the five years preceding 1869, our dealings with Afghanistan grievously damaged that country, and placed our Government in a position of great disadvantage and discredit before all India and Central Asia. Our traditional policy of promoting a strong, orderly, and friendly Government over the united Provinces of Afghanistan, though occasionally talked about, was neglected in London and abandoned in India. Trusting for guidance to the officials of Calcutta, the Secretary of State could never see his way to any decided line of action. And so we drifted on, at the mercy of events. And although the worst consequences have been for the time averted by the persevering gallantry of the Ameer Sher Ali, and the popularity of his cause, the terms of our connection with the Afghan State were left on a very loose and makeshift footing.

It remains to be seen whether Lord Mayo really got beyond a makeshift. There has been no visible symptom of anything better at present. He certainly succeeded to a pitiful political inheritance. At his Lordship's assumption of the Viceroyalty, the attitude of the Imperial Power of India towards Afghanistan,—so far as our past action indicated,—was something like this. Our successive projects of favouring "our friend," and of bringing about the partition of the country, having failed; Russia having utterly subdued Bokhara, and having advanced towards our frontier much more rapidly than we expected; Sher Ali Khan having proved more able and more popular than we had been led to believe,—showing himself capable of standing alone without us, or seeking aid elsewhere at his own discretion,—the British Government at last felt itself obliged to propitiate his good will by delicate attentions and handsome presents.

Our statesmen must learn, in their treatment of Eastern affairs, to trust their own judgments and to believe in their own doctrines. We can offer no instruction or example to Oriental nations, if we lower our standard of political morals to their level. Whenever our Govern-

ment, compromised or persuaded by its local representatives, has deviated, in its dealings with India, China, and other semi-civilised countries, from the international rules and maxims generally accepted in Europe, it has always made a blunder, and we have generally had to pay for it. Sooner or later, in one way or another, we shall have to pay for every one of these blunders.

The semi-official *Edinburgh Review*, extolling the wisdom of "masterly inactivity," protests—very superfluously, I should imagine,—against a "re-occupation of all Afghanistan."* I can see no special military obstacles to a campaign in Afghanistan, with or without the Ameer's leave and concurrence, should any just provocation, hostile intrigue, or menacing movement from any quarter, render such a costly expedition advisable or unavoidable. Every year of friendly relations will diminish jealousies, dispel fears, and reduce the political difficulties of purely military operations in that country to the vanishing point. But the so-called peaceful occupation of any part of the country would be quite as costly as an openly-avowed campaign, and every year of it would only multiply and aggravate the sources of disgust and annoyance to the people of the country. There are defects in our mode of administration, as well as peculiarities in our manners and ways of life, of which the Afghans would be more impatient than the Hindoos have been, and which are yet a constant source of irritation in our longest-settled Indian Provinces. Besides, the Afghans have tried it already, and they did not like it.

I dismiss then at once all idea of securing our position in India, and spreading our influence in Afghanistan, by what has been called "the forward game,"—whether our advance were to be confined to putting garrisons into Quetta and other strategical points, or extended into more direct political domination, by the actual possession of certain districts. Both of these plans have been brought forward under distinguished auspices. It has been urged that by a very little pressure, or as an equivalent for a subsidy, the Ameer Sher Ali might be induced to consent

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 43.

to the introduction of our troops, and either to cede the fertile districts of Koorum and Khost, and perhaps Jelalabad, or to allow us to hold them as his tenants at an annual rent. The occupation of any point or part of Afghanistan, whether we entered by the Bolan or the Khyber Pass, would be an immense mistake. We assuredly should not sit still when we were there. The temptations to further encroachments and vexatious interference would be incessant and unavoidable. In proportion to the extent of our territorial holding, and the efficacy of our management, the authority and dignity of the Ameer would suffer and decay, until he was either driven from the throne, or forced, as an act of self-preservation, to head an insurrection against us. Whichever form the crisis assumed, the British Government would be reduced to the alternative of either once more withdrawing from Afghanistan, or of attempting the responsibilities of conquest and sovereignty. In either case the prospect would be appalling.

And yet the urgent necessity for strengthening British influence in Afghanistan into an exclusive alliance and virtual supremacy, becomes every day more evident. If we do not assume that position, another Power will do so before many years have passed. Whatever we may think of the policy towards Afghanistan pursued by our Government during the last five years, it is obvious that the policy of Russia in the adjacent regions has not failed. The *Edinburgh Reviewer* treated with some degree of incredulity the predicted subjugation of Bokhara and the occupation of Samarcand.* Since that semi-official essay was published, these events have come to pass; and a province of Bokhara, including its ancient capital, Samarcand, has become Russian territory. Even in January 1867, the Reviewer hesitated to declare himself of that contented party of politicians who stigmatise what they call "Russophobia" as an "exploded fallacy", whose "vision of the future is that of the Cossack and the Sepoy lying down like lambs together on the banks of the Indus."† Yet he

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, pp. 3, 41, 46.

† *Ibid.*, p. 44.

pronounced that, "with respect to Central India the Indian Government can do no wiser thing than fold its hands, and sit still."* Meanwhile the Russian Government has been stretching its legs, and moving onwards. The advance of Russia towards the frontier of India, steadily pursued for thirty years, has been slow but sure. If any one should ask me what the plans and objects of Russia are, I can only answer that I do not know, but I am quite certain she will not tell them to us, if we put the question to her. Nor do I believe that safety is to be sought in the "neutralisation" of Afghanistan, or in any other fruit of that "friendly understanding" with Russia" that has been so much talked about. Neutralisation is nonsense. The neutrality of Switzerland is protected by the physical conformation of the country, by the free institutions and noble spirit of the people, and by their admirable military organisation. Belgium cannot rely upon treaties, but is forced in self-defence, and for the maintenance of her guaranteed neutrality and independence, to keep up a very large army in proportion to her population.

There is still so much of weakness and instability in the footing which Russia has obtained in Central Asia, that any diplomatic overtures in this matter will probably be received for some time with perfect complaisance, and met by the most friendly professions. She may seem to be more polite in form, but will hardly be more pliable in fact, than she was about Poland in 1863. As to her retiring one single step, or giving any more than verbal assurances on the subject of further expansion, it manifestly appears that it would be useless to expect any such concession, or to place the slightest reliance on any specious display of the sort with which it might suit her for the time to amuse us.† It is already clear enough that the assurances given by the Russian Government to Lord Granville that Khiva is not to be annexed or permanently occupied,‡ are of about as much value as were

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 47.

† *Appendix C.*

‡ *Papers, Central Asia* (C. 699 of 1873), pp. 12 13.

those given to Lord Clarendon in 1869, and repeated in 1870, that the Emperor would not retain Samarcand.*

It is by no means necessary to assume that Russia has any designs distinctly and deliberately hostile to the British Empire. Perhaps she has no fixed design, because she can form no certain estimate of how much is feasible, and how soon, until she has tried. She may be patiently watching events, but she does not sit still with her hands folded. She goes on step by step, and secures every step she gains. One thing is certain,—she is not going to plant herself firmly on the Oxus, at a vast expense in men and money, for nothing. It is no very extravagant supposition to make, that she wants revenue to pay for her soldiers and establishments. And there is more revenue to be got on our side of the Oxus than on hers. She wants, also, to obtain complete control over all the lines of commerce.

The commercial and political attractions and interests that have led Russia so far towards the frontier of India, are sufficiently obvious, natural and legitimate, without our seeking for any occult or malignant cause that particularly concerns ourselves. Still we have undoubtedly stood in Russia's way sometimes; her determination to recover and repair all that was lost or damaged in the Crimean war, and to resume her traditional policy that was then interrupted, has been proved sufficiently by the manner in which she has shaken off the restrictions on her naval power imposed by the Treaty of Paris. Without actually planning the invasion of India, or contemplating open war with us, she may think it convenient to have constantly at her disposal some ready means to distract our attention, and divert our resources at the next great European crisis. It is our own fault if we allow her to succeed.

The actual state of the chessboard, and the peculiar nature of the check that threatens us, were well indicated some years ago by one whose wide observation and keen discernment are now, we may hope, applied towards the solution of some of those problems which he defined so clearly. The following detached sentences from the Section

* *Papers, Central Asia*, No. 2 (C. 704 of 1873), pp. 9, 48.

on "Central India" in Mr. Grant Duff's *Political Survey*, do scanty justice to his lucid exposition, but they are sufficient for this particular point :—

• "The position of affairs at this moment is then this,—Russia has got very considerable influence over Khiva, has incorporated with her own territory a large part of Khokand, and has Bokhara within her gripe.

"Come it slow, or come it fast, the end will come, and Russia will devour the whole of what we usually understand as Central Asia.

"When Russia is fairly established in Bokhara, she will come into necessary connexion with the little-known country which lies between Bokhara and those parts of Afghanistan with which we are familiar, and she will pass almost involuntarily within the domain of Indian politics. Already she is said to have a body of Afghans in her pay."*

Since that was written Russia has become "fairly established in Bokhara." She *has* passed "within the domain of Indian politics." It is now our business to counteract and nullify her obscure but growing influence in the region from whence it spreads towards India.

To promote and facilitate trade and travel, to make our Northern frontier secure and inviolable, and to shut out from India a prolific source of wild hopes and injurious panics, there must be a strong and orderly Government in Afghanistan, exclusively subject to British control. It must not be open to the Ameer Sher Ali, or to any future Ruler of that country, to intrigue or to negotiate with Persia or Russia, or with any of their dependents.

How is this constant and exclusive control to be exercised? The Ruler of Afghanistan is not at present in actual contact with the Imperial Power of India. He is not within our immediate reach, or exposed to direct coercion. Unless we decide on the formidable operation of forcing the Passes, we cannot get at him at all. But he will very soon be in actual contact with Russia,—if, indeed, he be not so already. The great Northern Power may not as yet feel her footing sure enough to decide on the next step; but when Bokhara and Khiva have been reduced to unresisting obedience, and their resources organised in subjection

* *A Political Survey*, by M. E. Grant Duff, M.P. (1868), pp. 64, 65.

to Russian supremacy, a solid base will be provided for Southern expeditions. Whatever extent of nominal, and ostensible sovereignty may be left to the Ameer of Bokhara and the Khan of Khiva, the Afghan State will then be only separated in fact from the Russian Empire by a river,—that river navigated by Russian steamers. The British Empire is separated from Afghanistan by tremendous chains of mountains,—every pass and valley occupied by hostile tribes inured to mountain warfare. Under these circumstances—should the relative situation remain unchanged,—it needs no prophetic insight to foretell which of the two Empires must wield a predominating influence over the poor and comparatively weak State interposed between them. No Afghan force could compete with Russian troops; and roubles will go as far as rupees. We had better not rely on the *Edinburgh Reviewer's* opinion that Russia “cannot afford to subsidise”.*

How, then, is the relative situation to be changed? As it does not seem advisable that we should go to the Afghans, suppose we were to induce the Afghans to come to us? Instead of making a more distant frontier for ourselves beyond the Hills, suppose we were to make a nearer frontier for them on this side of the Hills. Anticipating the time,—not perhaps very distant,—when the Oxus will be the Russian boundary, suppose we were to make the Indus the British boundary. For our purposes a river is better than a chain of mountains. At present we have in fact no frontier at all; and are in contact on the Afghan border with no responsible authority. Let us bring the Ameer in contact with us, and then make him responsible.

We hold vast tracts of Afghan territory, much regretted by their former possessors, which are a heavy burden to us, but would be a precious boon to them. If our Government were to cede the Division of Peshawur, on certain conditions, to the Ameer Sher Ali Khan, we should make the most by the transaction. Besides the increase of revenue, he would acquire much dignity and authority by

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 46.

having regained for the Afghan people those lost fragments of the Dooranee Empire. The stronger he is, the greater his credit, in the eyes of the Afghan nation, by virtue of our good offices, the better for us. Our profit, after having parted with Peshawur, would consist in the reduction of our enormous establishments, and in the concentration of our military strength in formidable and disposable masses, though in smaller numbers, on a really stronger and more healthy line, instead of at least twenty-five thousand good troops*, being frittered away in more than a hundred forts and fortified posts, scattered along an undefinable frontier of 800 miles, on the skirts of lofty mountain-chains. Even at Peshawur, where a force of about 3000 British soldiers, and as many Natives, with more than twenty field guns, are constantly stationed, we learn that a great fortress is to be constructed "*at a cost of upwards of half-a-million sterling*,"†—nearly five years' revenue of the whole Peshawur Division,—to protect "our magazines", and to afford "a place of refuge for non-combatants, women, and children." And then we are told of "hostile tribes and unruly neighbours." Surely this intelligence should strike us with a sense of humiliation. Who are these unruly neighbours, against whose attacks our magazines are to be protected in this expensive stronghold? The Afghans? Not the Afghans who are under the Government of the Ameer,—but "the hostile tribes" who are under no Government at all, and can be brought under no Government, so long as we insist on occupying an untenable position on one side of the Hills, which prevents their investment or effectual invasion.

The following list of expeditions against the various Hill tribes along our border of 800 miles, since the annexation of the Punjaub in 1849, appears in a Parliamentary Return of 1864 :—

* I include in this rough estimate 9,000 Regular troops in the Peshawur District, 10,000 men of the Punjaub Irregular Force, and some thousands of Military Police, Horse and Foot.

† The *Times*, November 24th, 1868, Letter from Calcutta, dated October 27th.

Year.	Tribe.	Troops.	Year.	Tribe.	Troops.
1850	Afreedees ...	3,200	1853	Boree Afreedees ...	1,500
1851	Meeranzai ...	2,050	1854	Michnee Momunds ...	1,600
1852	Momunds ...	700	1855	Meeranzai ...	3,700
1852	Ranizai ...	2,000	1855	Raobenkheyl, Orukzais ...	2,300
1852	Osmankheyl ...	2,000	1856	Meeranzai ...	4,550
1852	Kaghan ...	850	1857	Bozdar ...	2,640
1852	Omerzai Waziris ...	1,500	1858	Sitana fanatics ...	4,877
1852	Hussunzais ...	850	1858	Kabul kheyl Waziris ...	3,991
1853	Sheoranees ...	2,800	1861	Muhsood Waziris ...	5,196
1853	Kusranees ...	600	1863	Sitana fanatics* ...	5,630

To make the calendar complete, three more recent expeditions must be added :—

1866	Afreedees ...	6,000	1868	Sitana fanatics and Hussunzais ...	20,000
1868	Bezotees ...	1,000			

Twenty-three little wars in twenty years, besides innumerable blockades, embargoes, reprisals, and fines on Chieftains and Clans, enforced by military execution! There was another little excursion under Colonel Keyes against the Bezotees, on February 24th, 1869, hardly worthy of being ranked with the above, for our loss was only thirty-three killed and wounded.† And while the first edition of these pages was in type, the mail that left Calcutta on the 27th of April, brought the intelligence, quoted from the *Indian Daily News*, that “there has been another raid into British territory on the North West, and about 2,000 head of cattle appropriated.” “A handful of troops have turned out”, it adds, “and we shall soon hear of another dashing retribution. Of course, the raids are very annoying, but the splendid army on the Punjab frontier wants occupation, and these occasional expeditions are excellent discipline for our troops.”‡ As some one said in the House of Commons regarding the Abyssinian expedition,—“it keeps our men in wind.”

According to the official list there were 5630 men engaged in the expedition under General Sir Neville Chamberlain, against the Sitana fanatics in 1863, usually called the Umbeyla campaign. Yet from a previous paragraph in the same despatch we learn that when the Bonair tribes, who had become involved in the affray, at last gave in their submission, “our force was now in a position to do

* *Papers, East India (North-West Frontier)*, No. 158, 1864, p. 139.

† Appendix D.

‡ *Daily News*, May 24th, 1869.

anything, *being more than 9000 strong.*"* Five British Regiments were included in this small but efficient army. In the campaign, from the 15th of October to the 16th of December, 1863, our casualties amounted to fifteen British officers killed, twenty-one wounded, and 847 killed and wounded of all ranks.† If we consider this heavy loss, and observe the progressively increasing number of troops employed, until we find General Sir Alfred Wilde at the head of 20,000 men in 1868, this chronic little war seems quite capable of growing into a great one.

Since the first edition of this book was published the border raids can hardly be said to have fallen off either in frequency or virulence. The large body of troops put in motion against "the Hussunzyes" in 1868 seems to have produced a very ephemeral impression, for in the *Homeward Mail* of November 13th, 1869, we find the following unsatisfactory intelligence.

"A British force is at this moment more than half way up the Black Mountain, and a severe retribution has been taken for the petty, but politically important insults which the Hussunzyes have offered us so frequently of late. Last week a large village was burnt, its crops were wasted, and a hundred and fifty head of cattle carried off by our troops. This vigorous measure will prove a significant warning, at the very commencement of the cold season."

The "significant warning" does not seem to have been effectual, for after a lapse of six months we hear of a new outrage almost in the same locality.

"The *Delhi Gazette* has an account of another raid by a Black Mountain tribe into the Agror valley. On April 9th, a strong party of Akazyes came over the crest, surprised the village of Burcha, slew its head man, burnt some of the houses, and made off with all the cattle they could collect. This village, and several others dotting the face of the slope, cannot be protected by the force in Agror, as there can be no reliable information as to the point of attack. Almost every night troops were posted in the villages at the base of the hill, but the enemy did not dare to molest them. On the 16th they again came over and plundered and burnt the village of Simbleboote. No lives were taken; one woman was wounded. Next day they plundered another village, and the rest were deserted by the inhabitants. They have

* *Papers, North-West Frontier*, 1864, p. 137.

† *Ibid.*, p. 112.

actually driven off every inhabitant on the slope of the mountain.*

There is an endeavour to account in some degree for these incursions, and for the failure of our Government to check them, in the following extract of a letter from "our own Correspondent," dated Calcutta, May 18th, 1870, which appeared in the *Times* of June 13th, 1870.

"The frontier campaign of 1868, in the Huzara district, between Peshawur and Cashmere, is not yet forgotten. The Indian press, with a rare unanimity, declared it to be a fiasco, and the verdict has been confirmed in a manner as humiliating to our wisdom as it is flattering to our sense of justice. That campaign was caused by disturbances in the Agror valley, which were traced to Atta Mahomed Khan, the Chief. We deposed him, and sent him off a State prisoner to Lahore. But now the revenue settlement officer has discovered that we had provoked the rebellion—as many hold that we did in Oude—by stripping the unfortunate Khan of his villages. Our 'summary' settlement, left him only 167 tenants out of 1,044, and but one-third of the rent-free estate given him by the Sikhs, as a warden of the marches, and then we held him to be no less responsible for the quiet of the frontier than he was before. And all this was done with the best intentions, in pursuance of that dead-level policy which has given birth to the New Tenancy Act. After investigation by Sir Donald Macleod, the facts were reported to Lord Mayo, when he was on the spot gazing at the villages which we had burnt in the so-called campaign. Immediate and full restitution has been ordered. The Khan has been permitted to return to his restored estates, after an explanation of the mistake and its origin. The local sympathy with him is great, and led to the disturbances. It is to be hoped that he will henceforth prove a most faithful buffer between us and the wild tribes whom we formerly forced him to summon to his aid."

The Khan may have been a "most faithful" but does not seem to have been an infallible "buffer," for just a year later, "we have the report of another raid by a border tribe into the territory of Agror, on the North-Western Frontier. It occurred on the night of May 4th," (1871) "and seems to have been an insignificant exploit."†

The raids and retaliatory expeditions just mentioned, all occurred to the North of the city of Peshawur. We may now glance at some recent events of a similar nature in

* *Homeward Mail*, May 21st, 1870. ° † *Ibid.*, June 10th, 1871.

the Southern district of the Peshawur Division. Here is a piece of news from Bunnoo,—or Edwardesabad as it is now officially called,—dated 13th June, 1870. The cantonment of Bunnoo is about midway between Peshawur and Dehra Ismail Khan, near the Koorum river, and five miles from what is termed the Western frontier.

Intelligence has been received that the Waziris on the Bunnoo frontier are 'up.' For some time they have been ripe for mischief, and have been fanning their excitement to fighting pitch by some grievances, real or imaginary. This feeling has at last culminated in a raid upon British territory in which we regret to say they were only too successful. On the morning of the 13th instant, a strong body of the Mahomed Khail Waziris waylaid a relief party of troops of the Punjaub Frontier Force proceeding from Edwardesabad to an outpost called Koorum, and cut them up almost to a man, six being killed on the spot, and nearly all the rest wounded. The Waziris then retreated to the hills in safety, with the loss, as far as ascertained, of only one man. As the ambuscade took place only a few miles out of the cantonment, the affair has caused intense excitement all along the frontier.

"It says very much for the alertness and discipline in the Bunnoo cantonment, that within an hour a European officer and a troop of cavalry were in full pursuit; but the affair was over. The avengers went rapidly up the Koorum valley, but did not see a soul."*

It may be taken for granted that retribution fell sooner or later on the guilty tribe, or some of their neighbours, but in this instance it does not seem to have been very promptly administered, for on July 4th of the same year there was another indecisive affair with the Waziris of the Mahomed Khail near the same Koorum outpost, in which our troops were commanded by Colonel Gardner and Captain McLean.†

Then, two months having passed, we find in the *Indian Public Opinion* of September 6th, 1870, a paragraph headed "The Mahomed Khail Waziris again."

"Late on Sunday afternoon, a small party of Mahomed Khail Waziris succeeded in driving off seventeen head of cattle, which had been allowed to remain behind after the rest of the herd had returned to the village with the guard which accompanied them.

* *Indian Public Opinion*, June 21st, 1870.

† *Homeward Mail*, August 19th, 1870.

On the 30th ult. a party of about 140 men were seen by a patrol near the dam which diverts a stream from the Koorum for the supply of the post, which they had succeeded in destroying before they were observed. A force of Cavalry and Infantry started, and soon drove off the enemy, who retreated into the hills. A sepoy of the 4th Sikhs was slightly wounded, and three of the Mahomed Khails received wounds."

But just at the time that the Mahomed Khail Waziris were cutting off our patrols, and insulting our outposts, their kinsmen of the Bajir Khail were showing their defiance of the nominal authorities on the other side of the nominal Punjab frontier. In June 1870, the Bajir Khail Waziris slew the Afghan Governor of Khost* and fifty of his people, including ten head-men. Whereupon Ameer Sher Ali is said to have given orders to "annihilate the mutinous villages of the Bajir Khail," and to that end to have put in motion three regiments, 1000 irregular horsemen, and four guns.

The extracts that I have preserved are not sufficiently complete to show how the Afghan brigade sped on its avenging enterprise, nor to what extent, and on what exact occasions, punishment was inflicted on the Waziris by the British Government of India. There can be no doubt, however, that they were punished. The following account given in the *Times* of March 21st, 1872, in a letter from "our own Correspondent," dated Calcutta, February 23rd, describes the penalties enforced against a tribe which had given aid and comfort to these inveterate Waziris of the Mahomed Khail, in some of their freebooting incursions, nearly two years after their ambuscade against our troops near the outpost of Koorum.

"We have recently succeeded in an operation after the manner of our older deeds in India. I telegraphed you that brilliant dash of Brigadier-General Keyes from Edwardesabad. The origin of the expedition was a simple one. The tribes of the Dour Valley had been ordered to pay immediately a fine for having harboured the Mahomed Khails during the late disastrous outbreak. The reply from the valley amounted to a defiance, and the next morning Brigadier-General Keyes was on his way to the valley, as direct as an arrow from a bow, with a force of about 1,300 Infantry,

* See Map.

300 Horse, and two howitzers. A small party which was pushed on to reconnoitre lost heart, and at last ran, and the Brigadier on the following morning had to begin his advance by a pass, which, by the rules of war, ought to have been occupied by the enemy. The little force was assembled at four o'clock in the morning, and, after four hours' hard marching, arrived at the Lochee Pass. There was a slight detention here, and rations were served out. At 11 the men were again in motion, and an hour's hard marching and dragging of guns brought them to a plateau on which were three of the refractory villages, Haiderkail, Sokail, and Haisee. Here demands for submission were made, but Haiderkail showed a decided hostile spirit, and our troops were fired upon. Two Sikh regiments—the 1st and 4th—were then pushed on; the village was stormed and fired; the 1st Punjaub Infantry and the 2nd Punjaub Cavalry completed the work, and the village was destroyed. This decided the other villages, which at once gave security for the fines, and submitted. It was the work of one day, and a couple of hours before midnight the last of our gallant little force was in camp, with a loss of half a dozen men and as many horses."

The report of the same affair in the *Times of India* of February 19th, 1872, says that "the tribe, on finding the frontier force upon them on the morning of the 7th instant, professed readiness to pay the fines demanded. This they did, however, only to gain time to collect a force. They were severely punished for this, for after waiting a short time for the promised payment, our men made their advance, and in the engagement that followed the Afghans lost forty or fifty men, while the casualties on our side were only six wounded. Moreover, their village was completely destroyed."

And yet in the *Times of India* of June 20th, 1873, (letter from correspondent of the *Pioneer*, dated Pathanpore, June 10th), we are told,—more than a year after the severe punishment inflicted on this tribe,—

"The Waziris, notwithstanding their professions of peace, remain incorrigible. Eight camels of the 5th Punjaub Cavalry, stationed at Dehra Ismael Khan, were a few days ago proceeding with supplies to the Tank detachment. Just as they neared Fort Girnee, a party of Waziris pounced upon the prey, which apparently was without a military escort and in the sole charge of two camel drivers. One of these they bound with cords to a tree, the other was compelled to accompany them, and to drive his camels across

the border. The sowars of the Girnee Fort pursued, but their efforts were useless, for the brigands were safe within their own lawless land. A small drove of cattle were just about the same time stolen from the village of Jutta."

Again the *Pioneer* of April 1st, 1874, says:

"We hear from Kohat, under date the 24th March, that a large part of the force at that place, consisting of two Regiments of Infantry and one of Cavalry, with a battery of Artillery, was to march for Thull the following day. The object of the expedition is to punish marauding Waziris."

At the same time a "frontier Correspondent" writes to the same paper, that

"The Bezotee tribe, who are subsidized by our Government for their services in keeping open the Kohat Pass, have been giving the British authorities some annoyance."

No one can refuse the meed of admiration to our officers, both of the Civil Service and the Army, in the border districts of the Punjab. No one would question their zeal, their talents, their devoted gallantry, or the benevolent objects they have in view. The question to be asked is, what is the result of it all? What have we gained,—what has the cause of civilisation and progress gained,—by all this bloodshed, by all this lavish expenditure of money and munitions of war, by all this display of valour, military skill, and laborious energy? What profit or glory do we get, what benefit do we confer, what example or lesson do we give, by periodically burning the villages, cutting down the fruit-trees, destroying the crops, and taking the lives of our turbulent and treacherous neighbours? Of course these unruly borderers are always in the wrong; they are incorrigible marauders, hereditary brigands, and require periodical chastisement. But this periodical chastisement has worked no cure. The infliction of such punishment by a great, powerful and enlightened nation may be a just and necessary act, but it ought to be effectual. There seems to be little glory and less profit, when the revenues of India, and the blood of British soldiers are annually wasted in carrying out a penal process that is neither exemplary nor reformatory, from which we reap neither reparation for the

past nor security for the future. The retributive raids undertaken at every provocation during the last twenty-four years, at a vast expense of blood and treasure, have been barren of reformatory results. All that we can say is, that by means of twenty-five thousand good troops, and the occupation of more than a hundred forts and fortified posts, we manage to hold our own, to repel the occasional aggressions of the Hill tribes, and to repay them in kind. The same story is repeated, officially and privately, by every one of local experience, that our relations with the mountaineers are more embittered than ever. The slopes and valleys held by the border tribes, especially between the Khyber range and the Swat country, are becoming a sure asylum for desperate outlaws, political refugees, and religious fanatics, all hostile to the British Government. The turbulent population of this debateable land is now incessantly recruited, instructed and inflamed by criminals and adventurers from our own Provinces, subsidised, as has been clearly proved, by the Wahabees and other Mohammedan sects of Bengal and Hindostan.

In short, the state of our North-West frontier is utterly intolerable, and promises to become worse instead of better. No one holds out any hope of permanent improvement, or offers any plan for the pacification and settlement of the Hills, except that which amounts to the invasion and conquest of a part of Afghanistan, a bloody, tedious, and costly enterprise in itself, with endless complications and incalculable consequences.

The late General Sir Sydney Cotton, an excellent military authority, who served on the North-West frontier in several important commands, including that of the Peshawur Division, between 1852 and 1862, who led several expeditions into the Hills, and had unequalled opportunities of observing the works and ways of the unsubjected Afghans across the border, and of their kindred on our side, holds Peshawur in utter contempt as a strategic position, and advocates the immediate and permanent occupation of Cabul, Candahar and Herat. He says:—

"Peshawur, our main frontier post at present, which was hastily and inconsiderately fixed upon as such, is, for us, in a false position. It is bad in all respects, and certain it is we shall some day or other, and probably ere long, have either to recede from it or to progress.

"At Peshawur, and on our present line of frontier, with restless and warlike tribes in our front, on our right and left flanks, and our right and left rear, we are engaged in continual wars, and the mountain fastnesses, which were to the Afghans a support and refuge, and consequently a security, are to us the very reverse, being the source of endless trouble and inconvenience.

"The heavy arm of our power has been continually felt by these demi-savages of the Afghan mountains, without any salutary or moral effect.

"We have not even caused them to respect us; in fact they hate us more and more.

"We are continually disturbing our empire from one end of it to the other, by hasty movements of troops, for the purpose of inflicting punishment on these border tribes, and no sooner is our object obtained than the troops return to their quarters; while promises are made only to be broken, and the withdrawal of our forces leads to fresh indications of hostility. Raids and deeds of blood, on a small or large scale, are the almost immediate, and certainly the eventual consequences of such proceedings. Often such raids remain unpunished, for fear of disturbing the country, to the manifest injury of our name and cause."*

Another distinguished officer, General Sir Henry Green, for many years Political Superintendent and Commandant on the North-West frontier of Scinde, referring to the "bold and fierce Pathan mountaineers" inhabiting the passes leading to Jellalabad, and the borders from Peshawur down to Dehra Ismael Khan, "numbering perhaps 200,000 men," says, that "to deal with these tribes with any hope of success would be most difficult. They are," he continues, "the most intractable people of the whole border country. The necessity of sending such frequent expeditions amongst them has proved this; and, notwithstanding, they are as unyielding and as little amenable to our rule as ever."†

* *The Central Asian Question*, by Lieut.-General Sir Sydney Cotton, K.C.B. (Kershaw, Manchester), pp. 6, 7, 8, 9.

† *The Defence of the North-West Frontier of India*, by Colonel Sir Henry Green, K.C.S.I., C.B., Honorary A.D.C. to the Viceroy of India (Harrison, 59, Pall Mall, 1873), pp. 16, 17.

Sir Henry Green recommends the permanent establishment of a British force at Quetta, close to the North end of the Bolan Pass, within the dominions of our ally, the Khan of Khelat, but overlooking the Southern provinces of Afghanistan, and commanding the roads to Candahar and Herat. We should, he thinks, continue to hold Peshawur in force; and the town of Dadur, also within the territory of Khelat, situated at the South entrance of the Bolan Pass, should be connected by a State railway with the town of Sukkur in Scinde. Sir Henry Green's proposals are avowedly based on the plans of that chivalrous and noble "soldier political," the late General John Jacob, whose worthy pupil and successor he has been. General Jacob, in the extracts given from his letters to Lords Canning and Elphinstone, in 1856-57, suggests that "in commencing the arrangements for establishing ourselves at Quetta, in addition to the subsidy now payable to the Khan of Khelat, under the present Treaty, we should take into our pay a body of his troops, both horse and foot, to be entirely under their own officers, and managed in their own fashion. Such wild irregulars are invaluable when there is a certain force of our own soldiers to form a nucleus of strength and give tone to the whole." "This would make us," he says, "in a great measure independent of the Afghans, while the enjoyment of regular pay by the Khelat people would have great influence on the Afghans generally." "We might then," he continues, "if we pleased, and it were necessary, safely, and with advantage, subsidise all Afghanistan with money and arms."*

Sir Henry Green admits that "to carry into execution the proposed arrangements would, beyond doubt, be very costly at first."† For my part, I do not see where the cost would end.

It may be that Sir Henry Green's plan would be less costly than that of Sir Sydney Cotton; but then it does not profess to deal with the Afghan Hill tribes,—it passes

* *The Defence of the North-West Frontier of India*, by Colonel Sir Henry Green, K.C.S.I., pp. 27, 28.

† *Ibid.*, p. 35.

them by, as hopelessly "intractable," and leaves us burdened with that humiliating system of strongholds and razzias in which we depend at present for such peace as we can maintain in our North-Western marches.

Captain F. Trench, one of that rising class of accomplished and thoughtful young officers, of whom our army may well be proud, and whose book is an indispensable store-house of the historical, statistical, and geographical facts relating to "The Russo-Indian Question," considers that we must "rectify our present boundary-line," and that, on the whole, the best step would be the occupation by a British garrison of "a strong fortress at Candahar." "One thing," he thinks, "is clear. To subsidise an Afghan Prince may be the cheapest and most politic expedient for a time, but sooner or later (probably within the next five or six years) an onward movement will be found to be the only course that is possible, having regard to the future security of our Indian Empire."

He fears, however, that "there is but little chance of any such decisive action being taken, as it would entail an additional burden on our Indian Exchequer; and as it seems to be a peculiarity of English policy to prefer the most lavish prospective outlay to a present moderate disbursement."*

The disbursements required for the construction of a strong fortress at Candahar, and the introduction of a British garrison into it—necessitating improved communications and transport service—might be relatively "moderate," but could not fail to be absolutely large; and "the prospective outlay" for the maintenance of the garrison and its contingencies, though not, perhaps, deserving to be censured as "lavish," would certainly be large also. Admitting the strategy to be sound, if an advance were unavoidable, I do not like Captain Trench's plan, for several reasons besides that one reason which I hold to be all-sufficient, that it "would," as he says, "entail an additional burden on the Indian Exchequer."

* *The Russo-Indian Question*, by Captain F. Trench, 20th Hussars (Macmillan, 1869), pp. 161, 163.

Captain Trench and Sir Sydney Cotton are, probably, much of the same opinion, on the financial part of the question, as Sir Henry Green, who thinks that although "the proposed arrangements would, beyond doubt, be very costly at first," they might, "by proving to Russia that we were prepared to meet her with every advantage on our side, arrest her progress, and prevent a fearful struggle for supremacy—a struggle that would certainly cost untold millions of money."*

I do not believe that we should be better prepared to meet Russia by making ourselves progressively more disagreeable to the States and tribes that lie between her frontier and ours. This we should assuredly do if we stationed British troops close to the chief cities of the Afghans—near Cabul or Candahar, for example—or in a commanding position at their gates, and among their habitations, as in the valley of Quetta.†

Our military politicians and a large number of our Anglo-Oriental statesmen will not see that a state of war is only justifiable as an open and strenuous effort, directed towards a definite end, attainable within some terminable period. Such a military occupation as they recommend, without the consent of inhabitants or rulers, or with only a colourable consent, of territory which we do not claim to possess or propose to govern, would at once constitute that unendurable condition, a state of covert war, of war without an end. Each British cantonment, with its exceptional and independent jurisdiction, would be a fretting sore, a busy centre of provocation. We should not be able to stand still. The causes of irritation would multiply daily. The rights of employing Afghans and giving asylum to them, of traversing the country in all directions, of freely buying and selling, of importing and transporting, that we should claim, insist upon, and be

* *Defence of the North-West Frontier of India*, p. 35.

† "On entering the (Bolan) Pass, you are in Khorassan"—i. e., Afghanistan. (*Hough's Operations of the Army of the Indus*: Allen, 1841, p. 49.) "The provinces of Shawl and Mustoong, formerly subject to Cabul, contain a large Afghan population." (*Pottinger's Beloochistan*: Longman, 1816, p. 316.)

prepared to enforce, for ourselves and all connected with us, would soon render our occupation untenable, except by a large development of military strength, and on the avowed footing of absolute supremacy, if not of actual administration. Far from "arresting the progress" of Russia, or enabling us to meet her with advantage, any of the forward movements that have been proposed would smooth the progress of Russia by making her welcome as a liberator, and would, sooner or later, throw us, in spite of ourselves, into the disadvantageous position of intruders and oppressors. In all probability, the longer open hostilities were deferred, the more extended, the more embittered would be the contest.

And yet, without reference to the progress and the probable designs of Russia, and with sole regard to the promotion of peace and good order, and a secure course for trade, in districts where we have assumed the duties of government, our military advisers are quite right in saying that we ought not to remain as we are. No one can defend the situation as it is at present. Our frontier system has failed hitherto, and there is no prospect whatever of its future success. The mountain barrier, through which all the commerce and correspondence between India and Afghanistan must pass, is in the possession of lawless freebooters, owning no ruler, recognising no interests, duties, or responsibilities beyond the limits of their own particular tribe. What are the real difficulties with which we have to contend? We are on friendly terms with the Afghan State. But neither the Afghan nor the British Government can rule the mountain tribes, or command the Passes, because neither Government can, in military language, *invest them*. Thus the entrance to the Khyber Pass on our side, marked by the fort of Jumrood, is in our possession; the exit, after a march of thirty miles, is fairly within the Afghan jurisdiction. The transit between these points lies through a natural fortress, which neither Government can surround or blockade. If the Khyberees assume a hostile attitude, the road can only be made safe for a single journey by a military operation on a large scale.

The great object of an open route for the commerce and correspondence of India with Afghanistan and Central Asia, has not been more continuously secured since the annexation of the Punjaub than before, and now seems as far off as ever. Our friendly relations with the Ameer Sher Ali are of no avail for this purpose. Indeed, the Ameer himself, before starting on his visit to Lord Mayo in 1869, was obliged to negotiate with the powerful tribe of Momunds in order to obtain an unmolested journey through the Khyber Pass, and only gained their safeguard at last by the combined administration of threats and presents. He had to do the same on leaving the Punjaub, and to make another bargain for the safe passage of the guns presented by the Government of India. This is the more remarkable because the Ameer is a son-in-law of Saadut Khan of Lalpoora, a Momund Chief of the Khyber, and is understood to exercise, through this connection, considerable influence over the tribe, though they do not submit to his rule.

The following piece of news, extracted from the overland *Times of India* of August 8, 1873, proves that what ought to be the great thoroughfare from India to Central Asia is still at the mercy of the Hill tribes:—

“The Khyber Pass has been shut up to all travellers for some months past. Nouroz Khan, son of Saadat Khan Momund, of Lalpoora” (father-in-law of the Ameer, as above mentioned), “tendered an application to the Ameer, offering his services for re-opening the Pass, and the Ameer has given him authority to do so. Operations are accordingly to be commenced against the Khyberees, under the direction of General Daood Shah.”

A leading article in the *Times of India* of September 12th, 1873, avows “more than a suspicion that the Khyber has been as frequently closed as open during the last year or two.”

But, it may be said, these operations against the Khyberees, which, as we have just heard, have been undertaken by the Ameer Sher Ali, may be completely successful. Certainly they may be successful, as many of ours have been, to the full extent of what was expected or intended; the offending tribes may be severely punished.

But until there is a Government occupying both sides, and thereby ruling within the Hills, no possible punishment will ever be permanently effectual. Whenever sufficient inducement presents itself, or a good opportunity occurs, the doors can be locked again by those who have never been deprived of the key.

The same topographical and political difficulties, incurable without such a rectification of frontier as I venture to propose, prevent the fertile Swat country—now an impenetrable Cave of Adullam for all rebels and refugees from Afghanistan or British India—from being brought into subjection and order by either of the two Governments. Here lives that mysterious ascetic, Abd-ul-Ghafur, the Akhoond of Swat, whose influence extends “over all the Hill and Plain tribes on the Peshawur frontier,” and “as far as Kohat,” who is “regarded with reverence by the Pathans generally,” and “fills towards them a position” which can only be described “by comparing it with that of the Pope at Rome.”*

Swat is the head-quarters of the great Yusufzye tribe, inhabiting, with its numerous clans and subdivisions, a great extent of British territory, as well as many settled districts under the Cabul Government. In the Umbeyla campaign of 1863, “when the Akhoond of Swat, so superstitiously regarded, so wildly revered by the people, joined the confederacy against us in person,” “the impulse of fanaticism brought distant tribes to join in the war,” whose “open opposition” had not been “anticipated” by the most experienced officers in the Punjab.†

Sher Ali’s refractory nephew, Ismael Khan, who conspired against the Ameer’s life in 1862, took refuge in Swat, when he eluded the escort that was conveying him into British custody at Lahore. Feroz Shah, one of the Delhi Princes, who escaped capture in 1859, having been one of the boldest and ablest leaders in the rebellion, was heard of in the Swat country, at least as late as 1868, and may very probably be there now. We read in the

* *Papers, Disturbances on the North-West Frontier* (No. 158 of 1864), pp. 68, 132, 133.

† *Papers, North-West Frontier* (158 of 1864), pp. 170, 130.

Times of India of July 4th, 1873 :—"The Cabul correspondent of *Indian Public Opinion* states that Syud Mahmood Shah, having got annoyed with the Ameer, has left Cabul for Swat. The Ameer, on his departure, addressed a letter to Shah Murd Khan, the Governor of Jellalabad, telling him to be on the look-out for Syud Mahmood Shah, and on finding him, to urge him to return to Cabul, because, should he not do so, great disturbances would be likely to take place. After searching for him a good deal, he was informed that Syud Mahmood Shah was with the Akhoond of Swat." It was to Swat that Behram Khan, the Momund, fled after the murder of Major Macdonald, near Fort Michnee, in March, 1873. The Ameer Sher Ali has proclaimed him an outlaw, and has confiscated the land which he held within reach of the Government of Cabul, but the assassin still finds in Swat an asylum absolutely secure from the possibility of capture or molestation. And so it must be: the Swat country will remain a menacing Alsatia on our border,—to become, perhaps, the central stronghold of some new fanatical movement or coalition,—because its green valleys, though hemmed in on all sides by British and Afghan districts, can be turned or blockaded by neither Power.

In the House of Commons on July 9th, 1870, Mr. Grant Duff, Under Secretary for India, referred to the advantages which he hoped a good understanding with the Ameer Sher Ali would give us for checking the raids of the mountaineers. But there are many reasons for believing that such a combination as he suggested would prove to be utterly impracticable. There are many reasons to doubt whether the routes of communication could be kept open permanently, and the Hill tribes brought to order, by any concerted action between the two Governments. The Ameer Sher Ali might agree to such action in perfect good faith, though perhaps with some misgivings, and yet the desired object might prove as far off as ever. His interests in unrestricted commerce would not be so apparent,—at least not to him or his people—as ours are to us. Coercive measures carried on

in common with an infidel Power against their kindred and co-religionists, would be viewed with great aversion by the Mussulman Afghans—the more so because throughout those operations their own Ameer would manifestly hold a secondary and subordinate position, while the expected results would appear to them of great benefit to us, and of evil omen to themselves. The utter subjection of the mountaineers and borderers would seem to break down the last efficient barrier between their free Mahomedan State and the formidable Empire of Brahmins and Christians on the other side of the Passes. They would only so far appreciate the advantages of an undisturbed road for commerce, as to believe that the profits would chiefly fall to the haughty Europeans whom they fear, and the idolatrous Hindoos whom they despise. While the Ameer was supposed by his own people and his own intimate advisers to be labouring for the benefit of British trade, he might find opposition rising at home; religious doubts and scruples might supervene, and the impending loss of power and popularity might cause his co-operation to slacken, without its being politic or even possible for him to make a candid confession of his difficulties. Even at the best,—if harmony were outwardly preserved,—all the work and expense of the coalition would assuredly fall upon the British Government. The Ameer's obligations would be vague; the extent of his resources not easily measured. We should have no means of stimulating his languid efforts except by open war. If we became embroiled with our Ally, all that we had gained would be lost.

The situation would be very different if the Ameer Sher Ali were constituted Sovereign on both sides of the Hills. All objections to a closer contact with British India would vanish before the brilliant prospect of regaining the lost provinces. There would be no more scruples as to the subjugation of the Hills, when it was known that they were to be brought under the direct control of Cabul, and not of Calcutta—that they were to form a constituent and connecting part of the renovated Afghan State. The Ameer's right to claim the submission of the moun-

tain tribes, lying between two parts of his Kingdom, the advantages of maintaining discipline among them, and of securing the free transit of goods and travellers through the Passes, would then be quite intelligible and indisputable; while his power to obtain these objects, with temporary aid, perhaps, from us, would soon be sufficiently manifest to make resistance hopeless.

So long as England and Scotland remained separate Kingdoms, excursions for plunder were incessant among the borders on both sides of the frontier. Many land-owners lived more by black-mail than by rent or agriculture. Castles and towers marked out the boundary-line, and every habitation was constructed with a view to defence. Deadly blood feuds inflicted miseries worse than war on great and small. The fierce and unsettled habits arising from the break of jurisdiction prevailed without intermission or mitigation, until James I became King of England as well as of Scotland. Soon after his accession, the office of Lord Warden of the Marches fell into disuse, the garrison of Berwick was reduced, and the frontier lost its military character. Border feuds, degenerating into private quarrels and petty marauding expeditions, gradually died away, and were suppressed as much by improved public opinion as by combined public force.

Peshawur and the Derajāt are Afghan Provinces. The Hills between our undefined frontier and the settled districts of Cabul can never be reduced to regular government by any one but an Afghan Sovereign. Whatever mythical accounts they may give of their origin, diverse as may be the names adopted by the clans, and frequent their feuds and factions, they all—if we except a mixture of Beloochees in the Southern district of the Derajāt,—speak the Pushtoo or Afghan language, and all are identified with the Afghans in religion, manners, and social economy. It would be the greatest mistake to suppose that the Hill country is irreducible, or that the Hill people are irreclaimable. We know from recent and authentic records, that much progress was made—doubtless in somewhat rough style—towards the settlement and sub-

jugation of the Afghan borderers during the prosperous days of the Dooranee Empire. Measures for the maintenance of good order and an open thoroughfare in the Hill regions were taken in the reign of the great Ahmed Shah, founder of the Suddozye dynasty, between 1746 and 1773, effectual to a great extent, so long as a Government lasted which held both sides of the mountain ranges. His son, Timoor Shah, resided a great deal at Peshawur, and there it was that, in 1809, the ill-fated Shah Sujah received, with splendid courtesy, the memorable British mission conducted by Mountstuart Elphinstone. In the disastrous battle of Nowshera (13th of March, 1823), which opened the road for Runjeet Singh up to the mouth of the Khyber Pass, the brunt of the fighting on the side of the Afghan Kingdom fell to the Yusufzyes, from the now ungovernable districts of Swat and Bonair. "Before the engagement with the Sikhs in 1837" (the battle of Jamrood), "the Khyber Pass did not cost Dost Mohammed more than 10,000 rupees a year, but after the above affair he paid 20,000 rupees yearly. Subsequently he paid, it is said, 32,000 rupees." "It would seem," continues Captain Hough, "that under the Kings the Khyberees did not collect the tax or toll levied on the passage of animals, laden or unladen, and on passengers; but under Dost Mohammed this was permitted."*

During the confusion caused by the civil wars in Afghanistan and the conquests of the Sikhs, the Hill tribes fully resumed their predatory independence. Since that period all their worst temptations and ancestral animosities have been revived and stimulated by political circumstances on both sides of their mountain home. Religious fury and a rude feeling of patriotism kept them incessantly on the alert, first against the Sikh rulers of the Punjab, and afterwards against ourselves. Internal dissensions made the Afghan Government weak, while the loss of Peshawur diminished at once its resources and its inducements to control the mountaineers. A strong Afghan Kingdom, on good terms with our Government,

* *Hough's Operations of the Army of the Indus* (Allen, 1841), page 317.

would find those resources restored, and those inducements redoubled, by the peaceful possession of the Trans-Indus Provinces. With a friendly and civilised Government like ours in the Punjab, able to afford effectual assistance, and to prescribe an enlightened and humane method of procedure, the good work could be steadily carried on without danger of failure or relapse.

It is clear also, if we look at the question from another point of view, that the Ameer would be brought more closely and more directly under British influence and control. His duty and his interest would run in the same path. His responsibility to the British Government would be very clearly defined, and very easily enforced. The territorial aggrandisement of the Afghan State would place a material guarantee within our grasp for the constant observance of all our conditions. Instead of a tough and rugged hide, Afghanistan would now present a sensitive cuticle to the hand of her tutor and physician. Intrigue at Herat or Balkh, scandalous oppression at Cabul, an outrage in the Passes, would be at once felt, and could be at once checked at Peshawur.

It has been sometimes most erroneously suggested that the location and habits of these unruly Hill tribes are not without some countervailing advantage to us, inasmuch as any invader of India from the North-West would have to force or to buy his way through them. Any Christian army, such as the Russian, would, it is said, excite their jealousy and fanatical hostility as much as the English, would find in them a formidable obstacle to its advance, and a terrible engine for its destruction, however dearly it might have bought an unmolested march forward, if compelled to make a retrograde movement. But this is to misunderstand the mere elements of the case. No invader from Turkestan or Persia would ever think of entering the Punjab until he had in some manner secured on his side the Afghan Government of Cabul.

A Power that is placed in immediate contact with the Afghan State—as Russia soon will be, and as Great Britain is not—must thereby acquire, according to the pressure it can bring to bear and the temptations it can

hold out, the means of exercising a certain influence over all the Afghan tribes, even over those in the Hills and within the British dominions.

The chief danger to be guarded against is not open encroachment on Afghan territory, or the annexation of Afghan districts, by Russia, acting either in her own name or in that of Persia or of Bokhara. It is the gradual growth of Russian influence at Cabul, till it becomes actual domination with all the forms of friendship. A well-informed writer has recently pointed out that "in General Duhamel's Memorandum on a diversion against British India, recently published by the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, on nothing is so much stress laid as on the necessity of an Afghan alliance."*

Some great advantage over Russia, that I am incapable of perceiving and appreciating, may have been gained in the course of our diplomatic action from 1869 to 1873, respecting Central Asia, as it appears in the Parliamentary Papers that have lately been printed. To the ordinary reader the nett results of the correspondence and conferences would seem to be that Russia consents to recognise as the limits of Afghanistan the actual possessions of the Ameer, and makes a great merit of doing so, declaring, however, that she is "the more inclined to this act of courtesy as the English Government engages to use all her influence with Sher Ali, in order to induce him to maintain a peaceful attitude, as well as to insist on his giving up all measures of aggression or further conquest."† Thus—with a passing sneer at our "subsidies"—Russia secures good grounds for a grievance against us, and for interference in Afghan affairs, whenever it pleases her to set up a dispute as to boundaries, or as to river navigation between herself, or one of her vassals, and the Ameer of Afghanistan. At the same time it is observable that no present cause is given the Ameer Sher Ali for a grudge against Russia, whose desire to keep on good terms with him is further manifested by General Kaufmann's conciliatory letter on the subject of the intrigues

* *Quarterly Review*, April 1873, p. 518.

† *Papers, Central Asia* (C. 699 of 1873), p. 15.

of the Ameer's nephew Abd-ur-Rahmān.* Meanwhile, Abd-ur-Rahmān remains as a guest at the head-quarters of Russian Turkestan.

The well-informed Prussian Correspondent of the *Times*, in a letter dated June 3rd, 1873, writes as follows on the subject of the Khiva campaign :—

“The principal object of the expedition is the exploration of the Amoo (thē Oxus) Delta. If one of the various arms prove navigable, or can be made so, Russian steamers, after the coercion of Khiva, will soon ascend from Lake Aral as far as Koondooz and the borders of Badakhshan. The scientific expedition which has already reached the mouth of the Amoo, may be destined to mark an epoch in the history of Central Asia.”†

Since that date the military expedition has proved completely successful. The defensive strength and resources of the Khan of Khiva have been found to be utterly insignificant. The capital was taken almost without resistance. By the 1st article of the Treaty that closes the war, the Khan “professes himself the obedient servant of the Emperor of All the Russias,” and “renounces the right” of making war or “entertaining direct relations” with any Sovereign or Chief. An indemnity for the war expenses is imposed, which, as it can never be paid—though the Treaty stipulates for its gradual payment by instalments, ending in 1893—makes the State of Khiva, if allowed to exist at all, tributary and subordinate for ever to the Russian Government. The Khan cedes to Russia all the Delta of the Oxus, and all his territory on the right bank of the river, with power to establish “factories,” “harbours and piers,” on the left bank. Then there is the extraordinary stipulation that the free navigation of that river is reserved to Russian steamers and other ships, Khivese and Bokharese boats being only permitted to navigate the river with the special sanction of the Russian authorities.‡

* *Papers, Central Asia* (C. 704 of 1873), pp. 43, 44.

† Letter dated “Berlin, June 3rd,” *Times*, June 6th, 1873.

‡ The substance of the Treaty, which is dated August 12th, 1873, was telegraphed from Berlin by “Our Prussian Correspondent,” and appeared in the *Times* of November 25th, and the terms of a similar Treaty with Bokhara, dated September 28th, 1873, were published in

The Prussian Correspondent of the *Times*, in a letter dated 26th July, 1873, says, "It is believed that the largest arm of the" (Oxus) "Delta can be easily deepened by closing some of the irrigation canals. Further up the Amoo is a deep and magnificent stream, as far as Koon-dooz."*

From the same valuable source of information we are told, in a telegraphic message dated "Berlin, December 2nd," that Russian officers have been commissioned to investigate the feasibility of constructing a canal between the Amoo Darya and the Caspian Sea. "It is intended to utilise the ancient bed of the Amoo, the most westerly portion of which communicates with the Bay of Krasnovodsk. If the scheme is practicable, a direct communication by water will be established between the city of Tver, six hours from Moscow, and the town of Koondooz, on the frontiers of Badakhshan."†

Thus Khiva is completely cut off from the sea of Aral; and Afghanistan—although the sources of the Oxus and the navigable part of its course for at least a hundred miles from Koondooz, are within her limits—is henceforth cut off from the free navigation of that river; while Russia, we may be sure, has no intention of cutting herself off from peaceful access "as far as Koondooz" by that "deep and magnificent stream." Should any brigands or marauders be heard of on its banks, a gun-boat or two might make an occasional trip in the interests of peace and commerce. Here are all the materials for a very pretty quarrel, or for a magnanimous transaction with Afghanistan, whichever may, at some future period, best suit Russia.

We may resign ourselves to the fact that the Oxus, formerly navigable down to its mouth, and the main stream of which is said to be capable of improvement or diversion, has fallen under the exclusive control of

the *Times* of January 6th, 1874. The Treaty between Russia and Khiva will be found in the Parliamentary Papers, *Central Asia*, C. 919 of 1874, pp. 1 to 6.

* The *Times*, Tuesday, July 29th, 1873.

† *Ibid.*, Wednesday, December 3rd, 1873.

Russia. Even if it should prove impossible to open the Oxus for boats into either the Caspian Sea or the Sea of Aral, Sir Alexander Burnes declares the river to be navigable from the Afghan district of Koondooz to a point very near Oorgunj, the old capital of Khiva, a distance of about 550 miles; and says, moreover, that the river actually is navigated by "boats of a superior description"—some of which must surely belong to Afghan subjects, men of Balkh or Koondooz,—fifty feet in length by eighteen in breadth, "constructed of square logs of wood, each about six feet long, formed of a dwarf jungle tree called 'sheeshum,' which grows in great abundance throughout the banks of the river."* Besides this tree, he mentions having seen "furze and tamarisk," and also "mulberry and white poplar;" "the last," he adds, "is floated down the river from Hissar" (within Afghan territory) "to Charjooee, and applied to purposes of house building." "There is," he continues, "every facility for building a fleet of boats, the supply of wood being abundant, and, fortunately, found in single trees along the valley of the river, and not growing in forests in any partial spot."† This even distribution of the timber would make it peculiarly available for the supply of a very pressing want in the strategy of these days—unfelt when Burnes wrote—fuel for steamers.

If the frontier of Russia thus virtually advances to the Upper Oxus, while the Hills continue to form a debatable land between British India and Afghanistan, Russian influence at Cabul will be absolutely supreme. Russia, firmly established on the Oxus, would not only overawe the rulers of Cabul, but could sway them at her will by displaying before them, at any convenient crisis the bright prospect of recovering the Afghan Provinces conquered by Runjeet Singh, and held against them by us. If we neglect to use that lever for the friendly subjugation of the Afghans, we shall have it used against us whenever the occasion arises. A doubly favourable occasion would

* *Travels in Bokhara* (John Murray, 1834), vol. ii, pp. 190 and 196.

† *Ibid.*, p. 198.

be prepared if we should ever be tempted into a military occupation of any more Afghan territory.

With the Afghan Government at her beck and call, Russia would not have to force her way through the Hill tribes. She would be able to push them on a long way before her. Any Power that would arm them and provide them, and push them on towards Delhi, would be a lawful Power for them, even though European and Christian, even though engaged at the time in the conquest of Constantinople. What do they know of the Sultan of Turkey? Their most inspiring traditions, their loftiest notions of religious glory and worldly renown, their ballads and tales, their debates by day and their dreams at night, are of the slaughter of idolators and the plunder of Hindustan. In order to make the mixed multitudes of India surge and quiver, from North to South, with a strange conflict of wild hope and equally wild panic, it would be enough to instil some organization and concert into the raids of the border tribes, and to spread abroad the rumour that they were acting under the instigation and guidance of the Afghan State, and of a still greater State in the background. By some such manoeuvres, and without marching a single battalion out of the annexed or protected territory of Turkestan, Russia would be able to paralyze our military power by giving it full employment within the frontiers of India. Nor would the situation be much improved for us or impaired for her, if, by long-continued intrigues and affronts, we were at last drawn on into a Central-Asian expedition, before which Russia might retire without giving us any materials for a triumph, knowing that she could come back whenever the coast was clear, and calculating that, meanwhile, every day of our campaign or occupation would add to our expenses and increase our political difficulties, both in Afghanistan and in India.

Any one or some one of the plans for advancing beyond our present limits may, be perfectly sound from a strategic point of view, if the Russians were likely to accept battle at a short date, so that the struggle might be brief and decisive. But we have no reason to expect that

any such solution would follow the enlargement of our military area. The strategists themselves do not expect it. For example, Sir Sydney Cotton's plan of stationing what he calls "subsidiary forces" at Cabul and Candahar, and holding other strong places in Afghanistan, may be quite unimpeachable as a military movement; but the gallant General—in common with all those ardent spirits and local experts who recommend what they lightly term the "forward game" of an advance, whether by Quetta or Jellalabad—means much more than a military movement or campaign. He means a great political aggression, the permanent occupation of a free country, against the will of the inhabitants and their rulers; the institution of what I have called a state of covert war without any definable end. This is perfectly clear, because the General says that "the establishment of British envoys in *security* at Cabul, Candahar, and Herat," which he considers to be "essentially necessary," would be "impracticable," unless they were "supported by subsidiary forces at Cabul and Candahar."

A subsidiary force, properly so called, is a force the annual cost of which is provided from some tribute, cession, or territorial assignment, granted by the State which accepts the service. But in this case there would be neither acceptance nor grant. Even if the Afghan Government were a consenting party, and willing to do its best, it would be utterly unable to make any appreciable contribution towards the maintenance of a British contingent. The country is so poor that no regular supplies worth having, either in money or kind, could be levied by the strictest requisitions. Whatever subsidies were wanted for a British Army of occupation in Afghanistan, would have to be furnished from the Indian revenues. A profuse expenditure might keep the Afghans quiet for two or three years; but how would the additional drain—the annual 2,000,000*l.* or so, to be cast upon the stony ground of Cabul—be liked in India? The Indian Exchequer could not provide for it without some new inroad, which would have to cut more deeply than

the relinquished income-tax; into the scanty resources of an under-fed and almost unclothed population.

That misapplied term, "subsidiary force," reminds us, therefore, that the plan of occupying strategic positions in Afghanistan cannot be considered merely as a military question. The political effects of "the forward game" would extend far beyond the confines of Afghanistan or the Punjab. All India would be affected. It is an Imperial question of supreme importance.

But if an onward movement be rejected, something must be done. So far our military advisers are unquestionably in the right. We cannot sit still while Russia creeps towards India, securing every step, improving her communications, destroying our external influence, and making the very weakness and disquietude of our present boundary-line a source of her own strength. What remedy can be devised except that which is here proposed?

Our North-West frontier system, while it is enormously expensive and burdensome, has hitherto signally failed, and there is no prospect whatever of its attaining a safe or steady equilibrium. We have, in fact, no frontier at all, and are in contact along the border with no responsible authority. The mountains that divide us from the Afghan State are inhabited by lawless free-booters, subject to no government, owning no ruler, recognising no interests or duties, beyond the circle of their separate clans, who form a barrier against peaceful intercourse from either side, but set up no obstacle in our favour against hostile operations. Their interposition enfeebles our influence beyond them, leaves the Afghan State exposed to pressure from other quarters, and relieves it from wholesome responsibilities that are indispensable for the safety of India. I propose to break down the barrier by making it an integral part of the Afghan State, which would thenceforth be in close contact with the Indian Empire, and could always be called to a prompt account if British interests were injured or threatened.

The only plans offered for the improvement of our fron-

tier system by the experienced local officials who fully admit its failure, involve an immense increase in our expenditure, while every problem, political and military, beyond and within our present frontier, would, as I have endeavoured to show, not only be left unsolved, but would be still more complicated than before.

By ceding to the Afghan State, on carefully devised conditions, the Peshawur Division and the Derajāt, most of our difficulties would disappear, and all of them would be simplified. It is difficult to foresee what objections that will bear a moment's thought can be adduced against this measure. It cannot be shown that by adopting it we should lose any stock of strength or wealth, in possession or in prospect. It is not, from any point of view, a self-denying ordinance; it is not a relinquishment of revenue. The expenses of the Peshawur and the Derajāt Provinces are immensely in excess of the receipts, and the proposed cession would clear the way for material and immediate economies. It is not the abandonment of a good military position; it is a retirement from a most deadly and unmilitary frontier—which is, in fact, no frontier at all—to a stronger and more healthy line, where our troops, though in smaller numbers, can be conveniently concentrated in formidable and disposable masses. By the same operation a doubtful friend and possible enemy is drawn out, cheerfully and gratefully, from an inaccessible region into a position so weak and so open to our power, that he is at once reduced, very much to his own benefit, into political subordination and pupillage. It is not the avoidance of a troublesome duty, or the desertion of a field of beneficent work; it is, on the contrary, the adoption and application of efficient means for performing our duty and carrying out our work, the means hitherto employed having utterly failed. Having for more than twenty years endeavoured in vain to induce those Afghan Hill tribes with whom we are in immediate contact to walk in our ways, or to treat us as friendly neighbours, we give them up, securely enclosed on all sides, to their own brethren, and ask the reunited nation to construct an orderly State, according to our

principles, with our counsel, and to some extent under our control, but by their own methods, with their own appliances, and on their own foundations.

No support can be claimed for the policy advocated in these pages from Sir John Lawrence's proposal in June 1857 to withdraw our troops from Peshawur, and to present the District to the Ameer Dost Mohammed. I am withheld from pleading the great authority of Lord Lawrence on my side by two distinct considerations,—first, that the measure suggested in 1857 appears to me to have been inopportune and imperfect; secondly, that we are by no means justified in assuming that Lord Lawrence would approve the measure suggested in 1869.

We are hardly as yet in possession of sufficient materials for a final judgment, or even for a complete criticism, on Lord Lawrence's policy in Central Asian affairs. Enough has, perhaps, been adduced in these pages to prove that it was not adequately described in the demi-official article of the *Edinburgh Review* as a policy of "masterly inactivity." Nor was much light thrown upon the subject by the noble Lord's speech of the 19th of April 1869. Notwithstanding the general tone of personal recollection and experience running through this interesting speech, we can find no thread of fixed principle or design binding together the events of the last fourteen years as therein recapitulated. Lord Lawrence reminds the House of Peers of the large share he took in these transactions, and virtually promises the Viceroy a full measure of encouragement and support.

"I believe Lord Mayo has done no more than act on the principles I suggested; I believe there is no intention and no desire to do otherwise, but quite the contrary; and I believe it is the wish of the Government in India and of Lord Mayo to pursue a course strictly in accordance with that hitherto adopted."

But he says nothing to make the "course hitherto adopted" appear less crooked. He fills up none of the gaps; he mends none of the broken links. In speaking

of the Treaty concluded with Dost Mohammed in 1854, he pays a grateful tribute to its real author.

"These overtures on the part of the late Ameer must be attributed to the wise and zealous exertions of the late Sir Herbert Edwardes, an officer of great mark, whose death was one of the greatest losses that could be inflicted on the Indian Service."

But he does not allude to the singular fact which we learn from Sir John Kaye, a very safe informant, that Sir John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner of the Punjaub, objected to both the Treaties with Dost Mohammed, that of 1855 as well as that of 1857.* Nor does he say a word in explanation of that still more singular fact, his own proposal in June 1857 to cede Peshawur to that very Ameer Dost Mohammed, with whom in January he had objected to make a Treaty.

The proposed cession of 1857 seems to have been based on no principle whatever, and to have provided for no future course of action; but to have been—as usual—a mere make-shift, calculated, as was supposed, to meet the immediate emergency. The siege of Delhi was then in that critical stage when there was even some thought of raising it. Peshawur was therefore to be handed over as a peace-offering to Dost Mohammed, while the troops at Peshawur were to proceed to Lahore and join an army of reserve to reinforce the besieging force before Delhi.†

The combined remonstrances of General Sir Sydney Cotton, commanding the troops at Peshawur, Sir Herbert Edwardes, Commissioner of the Division, and General John Nicholson, Deputy Commissioner of the District, appear to have averted this retrograde step, which was also totally disapproved by Lord Canning. Various opinions may exist as to the relative advantages of holding Peshawur and of ceding it to the Ameer of Afghanistan. The same differences of opinion may exist as to the retention of Gibraltar or its restoration to the Spanish Government. But there are times and seasons. To have surrendered Peshawur to

* Kaye's *Sepoy War*, vol. i, pp. 433, 445, 446.

† *Nine Years on the North-West Frontier of India*. By General Sir Sydney Cotton, K.C.B. (Bentley, 1866), pp. 190-197; Kaye's *Sepoy War*, vol. ii, pp. 607, 608, 612, 617, 618, 619.

Dost Mohammed, while we were engaged in that life and death struggle, and while thirty thousand Afghans were saddling their horses for a raid on Hindostan, would have been as if we had given up Gibraltar to the Spaniards, while the French and Spanish fleets rode in Algesiras Bay, while the allied armies were in the lines of San Roque. It would have been a capitulation without terms. It would not have conciliated the Afghans or the border tribes; it would have united them against us, and would have destroyed the power of Dost Mohammed to restrain them. The Indus would not have stopped them, if they had once got through the Passes. They would have come upon us like a flood. The Lumsdens wrote from Candahar:—"If Peshawur and Kohat are given up at this moment, we shall have all Afghanistan down upon our backs."*

Supposing, however, that the cautious and moderate policy of Dost Mohammed had been proof against the temptation of our avowed weakness, and his injunctions had sufficed to keep the Afghans on their own side of the Indus, the actual danger might have been tided over, relief might have been given for the moment to our overstrained military resources, but no permanent gain would have been acquired, no permanent good would have been done. On the contrary, there would have been an absolute loss of power and a real desertion of duty. The aggressive spirit of the Afghans would have been gratified at our expense, and the very circumstances of the cession would have precluded conditions being imposed by our Government for the advancement of its legitimate influence and interests, and for the maintenance of an orderly administration in the transferred Province. Such conditions could now be imposed without pressure, and maintained without effort.

One fatal defect has hitherto possessed and poisoned all our communications with the Afghan State. To whatever extent, and in whatever direction, we have endeavoured to control its course, our aim has been always transparently

* Kaye's *Sepoy War*, vol. ii, p. 621.

selfish. To this it must be added that our method has been usually destructive. Our action has been so purely negative, and superficial, that it has never produced, at the best, anything more than a superficial and negative effect in our favour. Too often it has recoiled against us.

Whether the British agents in India have adhered to our traditional policy of promoting the union and strength of the Afghan Kingdom, or whether they have departed from it, their vision has been always fixed on the outward aspect of affairs, and their object limited to some immediate exigency of our own. When we assisted Dost Mohammed with a subsidy and a supply of arms in 1857, that assistance was given because there was "*war between the British and Persian Governments*," and was to be continued on certain conditions of active co-operation "*during the war with Persia*."* When we delayed for six months the recognition of Ameer Sher Ali Khan, and promptly recognised two successive pretenders, it was—at least all India and Afghanistan believed it was,—because we supposed Azim Khan, the most able and energetic leader of the insurgents, to be "our friend," to be "more loyally disposed towards the British Government than any other Afghan Sirdar."†

In 1839, when we violently deposed Dost Mohammed, and restored Shah Sujah; in 1863, when we superciliously ignored Sher Ali, the lawful successor of Dost Mohammed, for six months; in 1866 and 1867, when we hailed with perverse alacrity the transient success of his rivals, and on several occasions during the civil war when we counselled and encouraged a partition of territory, we never evinced the slightest consideration for the wishes of the Afghans themselves, or any desire to ascertain what their wishes were. We bent ourselves to the inglorious task of setting up or abetting some *person*,—who, if ever so firmly seated, could not live for ever,—who was expected to be grateful, or "loyal," or manageable for our purposes. In every instance our project failed, as such petty makeshifts deserve

* *Collection of Treaties*, vol. ii, p. 431.

† *Ante*, pp. 7, 8.

and are destined always to fail. Our policy will assuredly fail again, sooner or later, if it rests on the expectation that the Ameer Sher Ali, in person, his heir apparent, or any of his successors, in person, will be "loyal," grateful, or manageable, on account of the assistance that has been given to him and to his branch of the family. We must not hope that the Ruler of Afghanistan can long be kept in the path of faithful alliance and orderly government, by means of an annual subsidy or occasional supplies of money and warlike stores. We must have something more solid than a personal basis for our policy. We must work for the organisation of an Afghan State, and make its relations with the British Government definite and durable.

In acknowledging the communication of a copy of the Treaty with Khiva, Lord Granville pointedly says, in a despatch to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, dated 7th January, 1874, that he sees "no practical advantage in examining too minutely how far these arrangements are in strict accordance with the assurances given in January last by Count Schouvaloff as to the intentions with which the expedition against Khiva was undertaken."* Though it may have served the purpose of the Russian Chancellor to be perfectly callous to this imputation, the meaning cannot be misunderstood. Our Foreign Minister declares that we have been duped, but sees no present reason for showing resentment. He is "not disposed to share in the exaggerated apprehensions which have at times been expressed in this country as to the danger to British rule in India which may arise from the extension of Russian influence in Central Asia," but he considers it "not unnatural that the Ruler of Afghanistan should feel and express some uneasiness at the rapid advance of Russian power towards his frontier. His apprehensions have been more especially roused by the reported intention to send a Russian expedition to capture Merv and reduce the Turcoman tribes of those parts, and he has applied to the Government of India for advice on the subject."†

* *Papers, Central Asia* (C. 919 of 1874), p. 7.

† *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Prince Gortschakoff, in a despatch dated January 21st, 1874, expresses his "entire satisfaction." In his "opinion the understanding is complete." He has "repeated to Lord Augustus Loftus the positive assurance that the Imperial Cabinet continues to consider Afghanistan as entirely beyond its sphere of action."* But he by no means undertakes so to "continue to consider" for any very lengthened, or for any very limited period. On the contrary, he quietly hints in the following paragraph that this period of abstinence may possibly be a very short one.

"As regards the eventual danger pointed out to us by Lord Granville, and to which Sher Ali appears already to have called the attention of the Government of India, namely, that nomade tribes of Turcomans driven off by our troops may return to seek assistance or refuge on the territory of Herat, and may bring about a conflict between us and Afghanistan, I have told Lord A. Loftus that we had no intention of undertaking an expedition against the Turcomans; it depended entirely on them to live on good terms with us, and even to derive profit from our proximity and from the outlets which we are endeavouring to make for peaceful commerce; but if these turbulent tribes were to take to attacking or plundering us, we should be compelled to punish them. This is a necessity which Her Majesty's Government know from their own experience, and which no Government in contact with wild populations can avoid. We are in any case the first to wish that this punishment, if it becomes necessary, should be inflicted as near as possible to our own frontier."†

In plain terms, the Russian troops will certainly invade Afghanistan to inflict punishment on the Turcomans, whenever such "a necessity" may arise, but will not—at least "*we* are in any case the first to *wish*" they should not,—penetrate farther into Afghan territory than they choose. It is, of course, doubly satisfactory to hear that "Lord A. Loftus has received the same assurances from the mouth of our august Master, and has doubtless reported them to his Government." Prince Gortschakoff proceeds to observe that "although the eventuality pointed out by Shere Ali is scarcely probable, the Ameer of

* *Papers, Central Asia* (C. 919 of 1874), p. 10.

† *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Cabul can assist in removing the possibility of it by making the Turcomans understand clearly beforehand, that if they provoke rigorous measures by acts of depredation against us, they cannot count upon any assistance or protection from him. The Indian Government is certainly in a position to give him this advice in a form which will ensure its effectiveness." The Russian Minister has previously taken credit for having always acted towards "the Khanats which lie upon our borders," so as "to deter them from all aggression", and to prevent any "violent collision from disturbing the peace of Central Asia," and adds :—"We have a full assurance that the Government of India will act in the same manner with regard to the Ameer of Cabul, and we have no doubt that it possesses the means of making itself listened to."*

But the Government of India certainly does *not* possess the same "means of making itself listened to" as the Russian Government does. In order "to deter the Khanats which lie upon her borders" from "all aggression", and to prevent any "violent collision from disturbing the peace of Central Asia," Russia has forced those Khanats to give up "the right of entertaining direct relations with any Sovereign or Chief." When exhorting the Government of India "to act in the same manner with regard to the Ameer of Cabul," Prince Gortschakoff, perhaps without intending it, really suggests a similar measure. If the Emperor of Russia, after stripping the Ameer of Bokhara and Khiva of a great part of their territory, has compelled them to renounce by treaty all external relations with other States or rulers, he cannot be surprised and ought not to complain if the Queen of Great Britain and Empress of India, when ceding territory to the Ameer of Afghanistan should require in the treaty of cession a similar renunciation. Still less could the Russian Government have any ground of complaint against our obtaining by treaty the right of control over the external relations of the Afghan Ameer, when it has already declared the British Government morally bound to restrain

* *Central Asia* (C. 919² of 1874), p. 11.

the Ameer in "a peaceful attitude," to "insist on his giving up all measures of aggression,"* and "to give advice in a form that will ensure its effectiveness." Our actual influence at the Court of Cabul is not really so supreme, or so easily applied, as Prince Gortschakoff chooses to assume it to be. If, however, it were brought up to the requisite height by the policy suggested in these pages, Russian influence at Cabul, and the rumours of such influence now current throughout India, would soon die away and disappear. We should then be, for the first time, in a position to make Afghanistan easily responsible for keeping her engagements with us, and also to hold Russia down to a less equivocal interpretation and a more consistent observance of her freely proffered pledges.

When we have once installed an Afghan Governor, with a well-chosen British Envoy close by him, at Peshawur—in former days a favourite winter residence of the Afghan Sovereign—the Russians may be allowed to embank the Oxus with their forts, and encouraged to navigate it with their steam-vessels, for British influence throughout the Ameer's dominions will then be paramount and irresistible. The Hill tribes will then be subjects of the Afghan State. Afghanistan, richer and stronger for our profitable retrocession, will be an unpaid outpost of the Indian Empire, a willing basis of operations if it should ever be necessary to wage war beyond our frontiers.

Among the details of the terms of transfer, on which no decided opinion need be given here, there might be a condition in the Treaty reserving to the British Government the right of holding a camp of exercise, at its discretion, in any part of the Afghan dominions,—in ordinary times, perhaps, every second or third year, and within the Peshawur Province,—when an efficient force, it matters not how small, of Afghan troops, might be bound to appear, to be regularly mustered, and to take their place in line, under the command of the English General. The irritations and entanglements that wait on a standing garrison or cantonment, need not be feared

* *Ante*, pp. 81, 82.

during the three active months of a movable camp of exercise.

In a second article which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* of March 1870, under the heading, "Mischievous Activity",—the former one, of December 1869, having been entitled "Masterly Inactivity",—Mr. J. W. S. Wyllie condemned the policy of supporting Sher Ali, initiated in the last days of his Viceroyalty by Sir John Lawrence, and carried out by Lord Mayo. The strictures of Mr. Wyllie on the pageantry and negotiations of the Umballa camp in April 1869, are wonderfully characteristic of the spirit of hopeless contempt that has long reigned supreme in the Foreign Office of Calcutta. "Lord Mayo erred on the side of excessive complaisance to his Afghan guest." If "the duty of meeting Sher Ali had fallen to the retiring Governor-General, it probably would have been performed in very different style". Sir John Lawrence "would have run up to Peshawur, attended only by two or three members of his staff", and would have "settled in an hour's personal chat with the Ameer whatever needed settlement". "He would have made no more fuss about it than he did about the flying visit which he paid to the Maharajah Scindia, at Gwalior, in November 1866."* Instead of "grovelling in supplication at the feet" of the English, Sher Ali "has risen to swagger among them as a patron." "He was allowed to brag and bluster as only an Afghan can." "Sher Ali at Umballa represented little beyond his own interests",—"his attendants, save two or three, were little better than menials, and vindicated their nationality by their dirty clothes." "British influence in Afghanistan is staked on the fate of one ungrateful and half-crazy individual, who clamours to us for more gold as his only chance of escaping annihilation."†

He says that there are "in the national character and

* When he displayed the most undignified mistrust on the part of the Imperial Government, and insulted a meritorious Prince, by compelling Scindia to break up his camp of exercise, and disperse the troops about the country.

† *Fortnightly Review*, March 1870, pp. 279, 286, 287, 301.

customs of the Afghans inherent defects", which render "the erection of a strong Government" on their soil "a complete impossibility". "We all know", he continues, "the homely adage about a silk purse and the material out of which it can't be made". And then, after quoting several authorities as to the turbulence and lawlessness of the Afghan Chieftains and people, he inquires:—"What is to be done with fellows of this kidney? We cannot make the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots."*

The "inherent defects" in the constitution and customs of the Afghan State and of Afghan society, are—as Mr. Wyllie perceives—the very defects which the Ameer Sher Ali has been persistently endeavouring to cure, but all such endeavours on his part are "Utopian", and all attempts on our part to help him must be "artificial". "The Sardars, or Chiefs of clans", he explains, "are all Sovereigns within their respective domains". "The authority which the Ameer, the head of the principal clan, nominally exercises over them all comprises, at best, little more than a right to levy a fixed proportion of troops and money from each for the common defence."†

"Hitherto", he observes, "Afghanistan had been parcelled out among Governors, each of whom received and used the taxes of his province after his own fashion, and remitted to the central authority only so much balance as he thought it unsafe to withhold. Similarly the army had been nothing more than an assembly of the contingents which, on sound of war, the heads of the various clans severally brought to the royal camp. These federal and feudal arrangements Sher Ali endeavoured to replace by a system of monarchical centralisation. He wanted a standing army of his own; and, still more, he wanted local treasuries of his own, so that the taxes might reach him entire, and the emoluments of the provincial governors take the form of fixed salaries."‡

Sher Ali Khan, that "half-crazy individual", having recurred, after his reinstatement, to "the self-same scheme for exalting the kingly power", which had proved so unpopular "soon after the commencement of his reign", is declared to have, "like the Bourbons of the Restoration, learned nothing in adversity and forgotten nothing."§

* *Fortnightly Review*, March 1870, pp. 304, 305.

† *Ibid.*, p. 304.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

§ *Ibid.*

One might have thought it would have been clear enough to the student of history, that there is a period in the progress of nations when the exaltation of kingly power is a step forward, although there may be another period when it would be a retrogression. Louis XI. was a true reformer, though Charles X. was a reactionary.

It might have been equally clear to the practical administrator that the "unpopular measures"* on which the Ameer Sher Ali was persistently bent were indispensable for the formation of a regular and orderly government. But no! "Can the Ethiopian", he asks, "change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" The "normal constitution" of Afghanistan is that of "discordant tribes," "of several weak and antagonistic principalities."† The Afghan Prince was "a half-crazy individual"—in short, a fool—to dream of rushing in where an administrative angel, even a British Resident or Commissioner, might fear to tread.

In the four years, however, that have elapsed since ridicule was thrown upon his efforts, the Ameer Sher Ali has manifestly gone a great way towards overcoming "the inherent defects" of the national character, and transforming the "normal constitution" of Afghanistan. It would be too much to say that he has brought all the treasuries and all the troops throughout his dominions under his direct command, that all the feudal Chieftains have sunk into provincial governors, still less that all the "discordant and antagonistic" tribes have been reduced to order and obedience. But most of the Chieftains, including the Princes of his own family, one or two of his sons excepted, have been deprived of control over the local finances and forces, their *jaghires* being resumed and commuted into a money payment, and their personal followers disbanded or enlisted into the Ameer's newly-organised regiments. And, according to the best and latest information, the cultivators of the resumed estates throughout the Afghan territories rejoice at the change, and find the Ameer's assessments much easier than the indefinite demands of the Chieftains, whose insecure tenure made them grasp at all

* *Fortnightly Review*, March 1870, p. 298.

† *Ibid.*, p. 305.

that could be got in each year. There can be no doubt that these were "unpopular measures" with the Princes and Chieftains and all their class. Thus it was that Sirdar Ismael Khan, the Ameer's nephew,* being aggrieved at his reduction from the position of a territorial feudatory to that of a salaried commander, was twice detected in treasonable conspiracy against his uncle's life, and, having been once forgiven, was, after the second attempt, finally placed in the custody of the Government of India at Lahore, where he died in 1872.

A very recent article in the *Edinburgh Review*, evidently based on the most authentic official information, bears testimony to the "strong natural affections" of the Ameer Sher Ali, and describes how measures of combined coercion and conciliation at length brought the most able and ambitious of his sons, Yakoob Khan, to his feet, and led to "bursts of penitential confession on the part of Yakoob, who said he lived only to be forgiven, and would welcome death at his father's hands if pardon were once obtained".† His father gave the greatest proof not only of undiminished paternal affection, but of undisturbed confidence and cool temper, by restoring the pardoned rebel to the government of Herat. When, in addition to these later instances of his clemency and self-command, we call to mind his repeated and ill-requited forgiveness of his brothers, Afzul and Azim Khan, and mark his efforts at reform—even if they be, in some respects, premature and purely imitative—it will be no more than justice to acknowledge that in prosperity, as in adversity, the Ameer Sheer Ali—very unlike the Bourbons—has evinced a great faculty for learning, and a great and generous alacrity in forgetting. Such a ruler merits our sympathy and support.

Imperial statesmen ought fully to realise one great fact,

* Son of his brother, Mahomed Ameer Khan, who was killed, fighting against him, in the same battle before Candahar in which his own son fell. *Ante*, p. 21.

† *Edinburgh Review*, July 1873, p. 296.

which Indian officials always seem to lose sight of, that Asiatics are men endowed with intellectual faculties very similar to our own, actuated by motives, passions, and ambitions, good and bad, very much like ours.* If the relations between the British Empire and the many alien States and communities beyond its immediate bounds, or encircled by them, and more or less under its rule, protection or influence, are ever to assume a healthy character, with some promise of permanence and consistency, our most exalted functionaries in India must be taught certain lessons, which, judging from their conduct and counsels up to the present day, they will never learn for themselves. They must be taught by detailed instructions from home in all matters of Imperial policy not to despise Asiatics, whatever their complexion or creed—not to despair of the progress of an Asiatic State, though left to its own devices. It will not help us much towards a clear understanding of their wants and capabilities, through which we might win them to our purpose, and guide them into a better way, if we habituate ourselves to think of the Afghans only as “picturesque ruffians,”* or dwell exclusively upon what we call their “treachery” when struggling against foreign invaders. Let us rather look at the brighter points of their national character, recognise such evidence of moral and social progress as their recent annals present, and assure ourselves that they know far more about their own affairs, and are far more competent to manage them, than we have been hitherto disposed to allow. Let us be very kind to their virtues and successes, and not entirely blind to our own failings and failures. We shall then be in a better position to survey the present necessities, and to form a plan for our future conduct. We meddled most injuriously with Afghan affairs from 1839 to 1842; we neglected them most injuriously from 1863 to 1868. Though I am far from saying that British influence and example have been of no avail, for I believe both Dost Mohammed and Sher Ali profited by them largely, it is in the main true that in the

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 3.

last quarter of a century the two Afghan Ameer, acting almost entirely without our help, and with very little of our advice, have made great progress by concentrating their strength, improving their administration, and humanising their political practice. Were friendly and confidential relations fully in play, our example and instructions, through the personal agency and influence of two, or three first-rate British officers, might do much for the good of the Afghan Government and people, without any approach to those contemptuous displacements and sweeping innovations that have characterised in general our political guidance of India. We must help our friends across the Indus to build on their own foundations.

In the circumstances attending the accession of the Ameer Sher Ali, and his deferred recognition, the best possible illustration will be found of an opportunity for what I call assisting the Afghans to build on their own foundations,—an opportunity, which was, unfortunately, rejected and perverted by the Government of India. The Ameer Dost Mohammed, well knowing his country's history, the character and habits of its people, and the qualifications of each of his own sons, and desiring to prevent a civil war, publicly nominated his heir and successor, had the nomination recorded in a treaty of perpetual friendship with the British Government, and on the death of the first heir-apparent formally notified a second nomination. But when the crisis arrived, which the old Ameer had foreseen,—when good faith and good policy both called for the prompt and cordial recognition of the heir, whose nomination had been solemnly confirmed at his father's death-bed, the praiseworthy efforts of our Afghan ally were nullified by the dubious and dilatory proceedings of the authorities at Calcutta. The germ of a law of succession, which, at the touch of a true statesman, might have blossomed into a pact and a precedent, was blasted by the cold and disdainful treatment it received from an Anglo-Indian official. The lost opportunity may still be regained. The most urgent problem of Afghan politics is that of the succession to the throne. However strong may be the ties of natural affection and mutual respect

between the Ameer and Yakoob Khan, the most able and ambitious of his sons,—complete as may be the father's authority and the son's obedience, while their relative positions and obligations last,—there can be no doubt as to Yakoob Khan's determination to succeed his father, or as to the Ameer's desire to secure the throne for his favourite son, Abdoollah Jan, whom he has publicly nominated as his heir. Unless an effectual process for peaceably carrying out the next succession,—or, better far, a permanent rule and procedure of inheritance,—can be settled while Sher Ali lives, his death will be the signal for another fratricidal contest, involving once more the Afghan State in anarchy, and threatening its dismemberment. If we are unprepared for this crisis, Russia, we may be sure, will not overlook its approach. If, when it comes, we are still separated from Afghanistan by lofty mountain ranges, while the Russians are in contact along the Oxus, they will be able by gentle and unobtrusive means, to which we could oppose nothing but military violence, to manage the crisis in their own way. Without moving a bayonet across their acknowledged frontier, the rulers of Russian Turkestan would be able either to bend the Afghan State under oppressive obligations, or to break it up for their own benefit. Russian patronage and a little money would suffice to turn the scale in favour of their chosen candidate, or Balkh and Badakhshan might be reclaimed and occupied by their vassal, the Ameer of Bokhara. A pretext and an occasion would never be wanting in the midst of a civil war.

It may be said that the Russian Government cannot compete with ours in the expenditure of money, and that if Russia were to enter any Afghan province, either openly with her own troops, or by pushing on Bokhara, we could bring a superior force into the field and easily repel the invaders. But that is not the question. No sane person, surely, would advise us at any time to engage in a competition of subsidies with Russia. It would spoil the Ameer Sher Ali and his successors, both as rulers and as allies. No sane person, surely, looks upon a campaign in Central Asia—whether with Russia against us as an

avowed enemy, or not,—as a desirable or indifferent contingency.

There can be no doubt that the military resources of the Indian Empire available for employment in Central Asia, far exceed, at present, those that could be opposed to them by Russia. We need not shrink, on military grounds, from a campaign beyond the Indus, or beyond the Oxus. Our troops would be welcome in Afghanistan or in Bokhara, if it were clear that they only went there to drive out the Russians. But such operations would be very expensive, and an ignorant "impatience of taxation" is beginning to manifest itself in India, whence, in conformity with precedent, the funds would have to be drawn. Russia, though poor in comparison with Great Britain, is rich in comparison with India, and can raise all the money she wants without any political anxieties. And if we look at the comparative cost of establishments, we shall find that money goes a great deal further in Russia than it does in India. Wherever a Russian army may march, its commissioned officers are paid much less than that average annual rate of £650 which is required for the officers of the Indian army. A Russian General of Division, even on active service, does not receive the fourth part of the emoluments of an Anglo-Indian General of Division in time of peace, amounting to £4,500 a year. The Commandant of 500 Cossacks does not get £2,000 per annum, like a Lieutenant-Colonel commanding a regiment of Indian Cavalry. The pay and allowances of a Major at the head of 650 Sepoys, about £1,500 a year, considerably exceed the pay of a Russian officer in command of an Infantry Battalion. All the cost and charges of our Army in India are on the same grand scale, and would have to be very much aggravated, before we could pass the Oxus. Without feeling any excessive anxiety as to the troubles of such a tame creature as the Indian tax-payer, neither Indian financiers nor Indian fundholders ought, perhaps, on cool reflection, to feel quite satisfied at such a prospect of enhanced expenditure.

The real question, therefore, is not whether we can beat Russia in subsidising or in fighting. The real problems

to be solved by the Indian statesman are how to avoid both military and monetary operations beyond our frontier, how to avert a civil war in Afghanistan, and, should a contest commence, how to keep its issues within our own control, and insure its being a short one. To attain these objects the Afghan State must be vitally connected with India, and made a recognised part of our Imperial system. The great political want of Afghanistan, the chief obstacle to the establishment of an orderly and progressive administration in that country, and to the formation of any weighty and permanent engagements with its ruler, is the absence of any law of succession. This crying want we should induce the Afghans to supply; this grievous obstacle we should persuade them to remove. We ought not to endeavour to do the work for them, or to dictate the details; but try to lead them to do it for themselves, and as much as possible in their own way. We should help them to build on their own foundations.

An article of great merit and interest, entitled "Recent Events in Afghanistan," in the *Edinburgh Review* for July 1873, which, if not officially inspired, is written with full official information, warns us to take no part on either side in the contested inheritance, and tells us that during the Umballa interviews of 1869, although Lord Mayo gave "good counsel as to conciliation rather than severity," he "was careful to say no word in favour or disfavour of any particular successor." "Such a word," the writer continues, "would have immediately roused the jealousy of foreign intervention, which is, perhaps, the dominant passion in that strong-passioned and uncontrollable race."*

With all this I fully concur. Not a word should be said by us in favour or disfavour of any particular successor. More than that, the Government of India should endeavour to divest itself of any predilection for any particular candidate. The personal element should be, as far as possible, discarded from our calculations, and entirely from our propositions. Our object should be to promote

* *Edinburgh Review*, July 1873, p. 297.

in Afghanistan the growth of legal principles and formal procedure, so that good and orderly government may gradually come to depend less on the personal abilities and character of the reigning Prince than it does at present.

It would be a great step in the right direction if we could get the Ameer, with the assent of his family, his ministers, and the leading Chieftains, to promulgate a rule for settling the succession, and a method for securing its peaceable observance. Such an important advance could never be made without some powerful motive operating upon all the parties concerned. The advisability and wisdom of the course recommended, though by no means above their comprehension, would not suffice to subdue contending passions and interests. But the motive held out by the British Government to the Ameer and his Durbar might be made all-powerful and irresistible. No Prince or Chieftain would venture or would be allowed to impede with his private ambition the restoration of the Afghan provinces conquered by Runjeet Singh. No course need be proposed that would be in the least humiliating or burdensome to the Afghan State. The British Government, before transferring provinces that have been under its administration, is obviously bound in honour and duty to take measures for saving them from the anarchy and misery of civil war. Such conditions would, therefore, be suggested as might best prevent the recurrence of a disputed succession. The Ameer would be asked to carry out effectually the programme of his illustrious father. We should ask that an heir and a rule of inheritance should be chosen, not so as to please us, but so as to please those in the family and the State who might have power to disturb or support a succession. And if it were once well understood that the settlement when duly made and recorded, would be no mere idle form, but would be placed, virtually if not expressly, under the safeguard of the Indian Empire, there would be little or no danger of any one at any time revoking his acceptance or suffrage. The odds against him would be too great; these very Trans-Indus Provinces would constitute a material guarantee for good order and good faith, in this and other points, always within our grasp.

Thus, by granting the boon of territorial aggrandisement to the Afghan State, with no loss or expense, but with profit and advantage to ourselves, it will be quite possible for us to extend the benefits of our superior knowledge and acquirements to a nation confessedly in a lower stage of civilisation, and at the same time to bring her more closely under our influence and control, without conquest, without any forcible intervention. If every facility and encouragement be given to commerce, the constant experience and observation of a mild rule and an orderly administration of justice on one side of the Indus, will tend to ensure the maintenance of similar institutions on the other side, in the districts where we have already planted them.

Of course there are those—especially if they have graduated in the Calcutta Foreign Office or fallen under its influence,—who will for ever declaim against the incurable defects of Afghan character and customs, who will continue to ask if the leopard can change his spots, or if a silk purse can be made out of a sow's ear, and will protest that the formation of a strong Government on Afghan soil is a complete impossibility. If we did not know something of the blinding effect on the English mind produced by the climate of Bengal and by purely official relations with Eastern races, we should be inclined to suppose that officials high in the Indian Civil Service and Staff Corps—competitive examinations notwithstanding—had never heard of the Wars of the Roses, or of the long Carlist war and numerous insurrections in Spain during the last forty years. Spain has made great progress, materially and morally, since 1833, in spite of, partly perhaps in consequence of, those cruel wars of succession. When gentlemen who have won academic honours and high official rank talk of predatory tribes and petty jurisdictions as abnormal phenomena, peculiar to Central Asia, we can only wonder if they have heard what the political condition of Germany or of Scotland was in the Middle Ages, or of Italy towards the close of the 16th. century, during the Pontificate of Sixtus V. Is it possible that they can have ever tried to form some notion of the early

years of our Henry the Seventh's reign, when half the property of England changed hands,—when every man who had helped Richard the Third in the slightest degree became the new King's "rebel" or "traitor," and his lands or goods were made forfeit to the Crown, because he had aided and abetted "the late Duke of Gloucester, King of England, in deed but not in right"? Have they any clear idea of the forces at work and the feelings prevalent in these islands when the following words were penned by a well-informed person of high rank and culture, the letter being dated in November, 1748?

"New dangers threaten us from the untameable bigotry of the Scotch Jacobites, encouraged by the insolence of their friends in many parts of England. We hear that one of the Frasers, who was witness against Lord Lovat, is already murdered in Scotland, and his house burnt down to the ground. Lord Elcho and some others of his fellow rebels are returned to the Highlands, and the youngest son of Lord Lovat, who was lately at Utrecht, is come over and joined his father's clan, and seems resolved to keep possession of the estate."*

It may be that as late as the middle of the eighteenth century there were English and even Scottish politicians who with Pharisaic piety despaired of the Highland clans and their Chieftains ever being converted into orderly citizens. But surely we have learned something since 1745 in both historical and political science.

Those who within the last quarter of a century have had opportunities of local observation and intercourse, may be of opinion that such rudiments of reform and improvement as are discernible in the doctrine and practice of the Afghan State, are due to our influence and example. There may be a great deal of truth in this, and we may well be proud of it. Moreover, it has been said that a decided change in the public opinion and political maxims of the country may be traced to the reports and recollections of what was accomplished or attempted during our brief supervision of Shah Sujah's Government.

* *Letters of the First Earl of Malmesbury*, etc. (Bentley, 1870), vol. i, p. 70.

This is very probable. Good often rises out of evil; and we may hope that the Afghans did really reap some permanent advantage from that iniquitous aggression. That in spite of all enmities and heartburnings, a distinct impression was left of some of our better qualities as men and as rulers, may well be believed. Of the great personal influence exercised for good by certain British officers there can be no doubt at all. The name of Rawlinson, for instance, will never be forgotten or unhonoured at Candahar. And yet in this direction, also, it is equally true that we must have something more solid than a personal basis for our policy in Afghanistan. We must put our trust neither in her Princes nor in our Paladins.

Such personal influence is not all in all; nor is it always to be had. Certainly I do not undervalue those distinguished men who have wrought out great results for their country's glory, and for the good of Eastern races, by their gallantry, their talents, and their devotion to duty. It is not I who undervalue them, but those who seem to think that the supply of such men is unlimited. I by no means believe that an Edwardes, a George Clerk, or a Henry Lawrence can be picked up in every mess-room, or even in every competitive examination. Even if they could be found, they are not wanted in great numbers. The personal influence of exceptional men from our own ranks, were they always at hand at the right moment, could never be all in all in our relations with the Eastern world. Their fine qualities and rare acquirements are rightly applicable for the advancement of our interests among Oriental nations, and for the benefit of those nations themselves, only with the predetermination that their action shall be temporary,—chiefly for military and diplomatic affairs, sometimes for efforts of organisation and settlement in critical emergencies.

When we are compelled to undertake the thorough reconstruction of a dependent State,—whether in conformity with the provisions of a Treaty, or simply on prudential grounds,—the act is revolutionary, and should be limited in extent and time to the positive necessities of the case. This is the work we were doing in Mysore,

until the official propensities of Calcutta turned it into a field for patronage. This is the work we are doing with most beneficial effect in Bhawalpore. This is the work we now have a noble opportunity of aiding in the Nizam's Dominions, during the infancy of the reigning Prince. The establishment of a regular financial and judicial system in an Eastern State, under the management of English officers,—should it unfortunately be necessary to employ more than one or two,—must never be the aim and end of our reforming operations. Our work will not be fairly done until we have replaced Native agency at the head of every department. I do not object to the use of leading strings, but only to their being kept on for ever. Good administration is not identical with good government, so long as it can only be worked by foreigners, and maintained by military force.

The most urgent problem of Eastern statesmanship is how to reconcile self-government for India with Imperial supremacy for Great Britain. My doctrine is that the more we concede the former, the more we confirm the latter. Many who dispute, or would indefinitely defer, the applicability of this problem to Indian affairs, will admit it with reference to Afghanistan.

The possibility of leading the turbulent communities of the Hills to abandon their wild habits, to become peaceful cultivators and punctual taxpayers,—if any regular Government could get at them,—has been sufficiently proved by the successful transformation of that sort effected, among the cognate tribes of the Trans-Indus Provinces. These are the truest and brightest triumphs of Sir John Lawrence's administration of the Punjab. Some interesting *Notes on Bunnoo*, (the most Northerly part of the Derajat, immediately adjoining the Kohat District of the Peshawur Division*) by Major H. B. Urmston, Deputy Commissioner, written in 1866, printed early in 1869 at the Government Press, Lahore, may be usefully quoted

* See Map.

on this subject. For what has been done in this District, recently under his own charge, Major Urmston gives the highest credit, as was due, to those distinguished officers who first ruled in Bunnoo,—Herbert Edwardes, during our guardianship of the Maharajah Dhuleep Sing, John Nicholson, and Reynell Taylor since the annexation, of whom the last-mentioned alone is living.*

“Eighteen years have now passed away since Sir Herbert (then Lieutenant Edwardes, Assistant to the Resident at Lahore), in the name of the Sikh Government, took possession of the country, and laid the foundations of the fort of Dhuleepghur. Many of the leading characters described with so much life in his book (*A Year on the Punjab Frontier*) have disappeared from the scene; some are still living who delight to speak of the first English ruler; while the younger branches, now well advanced in manhood, have not forgotten those early days when their fathers were called upon to level their 400 forts, and bend their necks for the first time to the yoke of the Feringhee Hakim. Nor have sixteen years of peaceful rule been unmarked by progress; many a blood-stained sword and dagger have been converted into a ploughshare,—many a fighting ‘goondee’, or faction, into loyal and obedient agriculturists. True—the ‘goondees’ do still exist to a certain extent. They will not, perhaps, ever become wholly extinct; but their quarrels are now quietly referred to the Courts of Justice, instead of, as in olden times, to the force of arms. This of itself is one great stride in civilisation,—a sure sign of a strong and settled Government. Indeed, it is impossible to mix with the people, or talk with the old grey-beards of a village, without being struck by their opinion of the revolution caused by British rule and British laws. One and all acknowledge the blessings,—political and social,—which have been conferred.

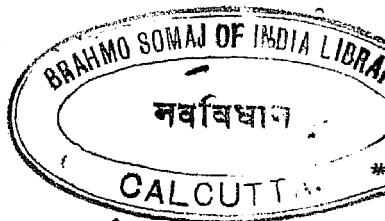
“These benefits are manifest in marked increase of value given to property, improved appearance and condition of the people, and their appreciation of rights in the soil. Land previously fallow for many generations has, within the present decade, been brought under cultivation to the extent of many thousand acres, which were, till recently, covered with jungle, infested by wild beasts and highway robbers.”†

* Major-General, Commissioner of the Umritsur Division, and after more than a quarter of a century of continuously distinguished service only a C.B. and a C.S.I.

† *Notes on the Bunnoo District* (*Selections from the Records of the Punjab Government*, No. 1), by Major H. B. Urmston, Deputy Commissioner. Government Press, Lahore, 1869.

It may be asked whether we are justified in risking the continued existence of these remarkable reforms, by transferring British territory and subjects to the tender mercies of an Eastern despot. Such a policy may be denounced as an unworthy abdication of power and abandonment of duty. It is not an abdication, but an assumption of power. The Kingdom of Afghanistan is drawn by this policy from a remote and unapproachable seclusion into direct contact and intimate association with the Imperial Government of India. What is that but subordination to British power? With judicious management, the result cannot be doubtful. It is not an abandonment, but a fulfilment of duty. A charge is imposed upon the Ruler of Afghanistan which he can perform with our aid and counsel, but which, even with his assistance, is beyond our ability, and he is thereby led from Eastern despotism towards a Sovereignty of law and order. The plant of progress, exotic and precarious under foreign nursing, is acclimatised and made hardy by being trusted to native cultivation.

Of course the Ameer would not be placed in possession of any territory that had been under British management without ample securities for the maintenance of good government, religious toleration and equality before the law of all sects and races, as at present established. Those who have felt and enjoyed those blessings will not be inclined to give them up; and it may be hoped that a short experience by Prince and people of their advantages on *this* side, would soon carry them over to the other side of the Hills, no longer a barrier between separate jurisdictions. The greater freedom and frequency of intercourse and commerce between the two sections of the Afghan State, and, between the Afghan State and British India, the force conferred on British counsels, the facilities acquired for British instruction and guidance, must all work towards the same goal,—the absolute predominance of British influence in the regions between the Oxus and the Indus.



APPENDIX.

(A.)

Treaty between the British Government and His Highness Ameer Dost Mahommed Khan, Walee of Cabul and of those Countries of Afghanistan now in his possession, concluded, on the part of the British Government, by John Lawrence, Esquire, Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, in virtue of full powers vested in him by the Most Noble James Andrew, Marquis of Dalhousie, K.T., etc., Governor General of India, and on the part of the Ameer of Cabul, Dost Mohammed Khan, by Sirdar Gholam Hyder Khan, in virtue of full authority granted to him by His Highness.

ARTICLE 1ST.

Between the Honourable East India Company and His Highness Ameer Dost Mahommed Khan, Walee of Cabul and of those Countries of Afghanistan now in his possession, and the heirs of the said Ameer, there shall be perpetual peace and friendship.

ARTICLE 2ND.

The Honourable East India Company engages to respect those Territories of Afghanistan now in His Highness' possession, and never to interfere therein.

ARTICLE 3RD.

His Highness Ameer Dost Mahommed Khan, Walee of Cabul and of those Countries of Afghanistan now in his possession, engages on his own part, and on the part of his heirs, to respect the Territories of the Honourable East India Company, and never to interfere therein; and to be the friend of the friends and enemy of the enemies, of the Honourable East India Company.

Done at Peshawur this Thirteenth day of March, One thousand Eight hundred and Fifty-five, corresponding with the

- Eleventh day of Rujjub, One thousand Two hundred and Seventy-one Hijree.

(Signed) JOHN LAWRENCE,
Chief Commissioner of the Punjab.

(Signed) GHOLAM HYDER,
*Heir Apparent,
As the Representative of Ameer Dost Ma-
hommed Khan and in person on his own
account as Heir Apparent.*

Ratified by the Most Noble the Governor-General at Ootac-
mund, this First day of May, One thousand Eight hundred and
Fifty-five.

(Signed) DAHOUSIE.

By order of the Most Noble the Governor-General,

(Signed) G. F. EDMONSTONE,
*Secretary to the Government of India,
With the Governor-General.*

(B.)

“THE OLD FOOTING OF TRUST AND GOOD WILL.”

(Page 37.)

Lord Mayo's reception of the Ameer Sher Ali at Umballah, and the subsequent negotiations at that place in April 1869, may have brought about a better understanding, but the following extract from the letter of a well-informed observer, will suggest, perhaps, a doubt whether the *Edinburgh Reviewer* did not rather anticipate matters, when he wrote of “*trust and good will*” in 1866.

“It is said that the negotiations were not carried to their present satisfactory conclusion without some difficulty. Everything has, however, at last terminated well, and the Ameer, *who was at first very distrustful of British policy*, will go away pleased with his visit and satisfied of our sincerity. He says he intends to make no secret of the agreement between himself and us. ‘I hate paper work,’ he said, ‘and secret diplomacy. I like a clear, plain policy. I shall announce what has been agreed upon, for I am not going to give grounds for suspicion that there are two treaties, one secret, the other public.’ *I have observed that he distrusted us at first and made no secret of his feeling.* To one official he said: ‘*The British Government is responsible for the bloodshed of the last three years.*’ To another, who begged him to speak

out his wishes and intentions in order that the British Government might know how to frame its policy, he rejoined sharply, 'What is the policy of the British Government?' **

(C.)

RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA.

(Page 43.)

Mr. Gladstone's remarks in the House of Commons on the 8th of April, 1869, concerning the exchange of opinions between the British and Russian Governments on the state of Central Asia, with reference to the proposed motion on that subject by Mr. E. B. Eastwick, Member for Penrhyn, are thus animadverted upon in the *Moscow Gazette* :—

"What we have foreseen for a couple of months has come to pass. England and Russia have entered upon a 'negotiation of a most friendly and satisfactory character' respecting Asiatic affairs. It is not very intelligible, though, why Mr. Gladstone, in letting Parliament into the secret, should have thought it necessary to confine his disclosures to the few words we have just quoted. Ordinarily, it is only in the case of difficult negotiations, or when war and peace are at issue, that British Ministers deem it incumbent upon them to give evasive answers to questions of a diplomatic nature put to them in Parliament. Neither being the case in the present instance, we are at a loss to divine why greater communicativeness on the part of the Ministers might, as he said, interfere with the satisfactory progress of the affair. What progress? What affair? Probably the British Government have reasons of their own for wishing to prevent the matter being discussed by the representatives of the country. However that may be, the press, not being fettered by diplomatic considerations, ought to sift this particular subject all the more carefully. Opinions enunciated by independent papers, though not binding upon Governments, may yet serve to throw considerable light upon the subject under discussion, and had better be published while as yet it is not too late to influence the decisions to be arrived at. We have watched the English press since it first began to speak of the necessity of effecting some arrangement between Russia and England touching Central Asia. Among the expedients proposed by the English papers, there was one suggesting that Afghanistan should be converted into a neutral State on the Belgian pattern, and the adjoining Khanates be included in the privileges of European national law. But we cannot bring ourselves to believe that

* Letter from Umballa, April 4th, *Homeward Mail*, May 3rd, 1869.

English politicians should have really hit upon the device of making us engage not to extend our frontiers beyond a certain point, or not to do such and such things in our relations with the Khanates. There is too much political good sense in England to make them adopt a basis of negotiation which could not produce any practical results. Our suppositions in regard to this are strengthened by the circumstance that England has hastened to secure, without foreign concurrence, the neutrality of Afghanistan, or rather the goodwill of the Afghans for herself. After a long interval, in which England contented herself with the part of a vigilant observer, she has recently paid subsidies to Sher Ali, and recognised him as the legitimate Ruler of Afghanistan. Quite recently this newly-made potentate has been received with much theatrical display by the Governor-General of India, and, it is rumoured, been promised an annual salary of £120,000. Thus England is endeavouring to place herself on good terms with the Ameer of Afghanistan; and if Russia is obliged to let her do as she pleases, England in turn must be content with our treating the Ameer of Bokhara as we please. A political agreement being, then, entirely out of the question, the negotiations alluded to by Mr. Gladstone can have reference only to commercial interests. Our commercial stake in Central Asia is quite as important to us as our political; and if Mr. Gladstone is right in expressing himself with so much complacency upon the attitude assumed by our Government in their confidential palavers with him, it is but too probable that what he regards as satisfactory will not be equally so to our mercantile community. As to the wish of the English papers to see Consuls installed in Turkistan, and Russian Consuls in India, we cannot ourselves see the good it would do. We have no direct commerce with India. There are neither Russian factories nor Russian subjects to be found in the country. Why, then, should we burden our Budget with the salaries of superfluous representatives? And why, indeed, should England wish to station a Consul at Tashkent? Would not his only occupation consist in watching the action of our Government, and is he, perhaps, to intrigue with the Natives and to arm them against us? But recently M. Vambéry, in a letter to the *Times*, advised the English to send Consuls to the towns of Central Asia. M. Vambéry is the implacable enemy of Russia, and counsels vouchsafed by him ought to serve as a timely warning to ourselves. Only extreme necessity has forced us to extend our Asiatic frontier further South. We believe we have a right to expect some reward for the sacrifices made on that occasion, and, if our hopes are fulfilled, shall not only retain possession of the vast market of Turkistan, but through it gain access to Chinese Tartary, a country unapproachable from every other side. It is but natural that the English

should try to throw impediments in our way in that direction. In conclusion, we cannot but repeat the opinion expressed by us on a former occasion, that in the event of an Eastern war Turkistan will be a formidable basis of operations for us against the English. If, however, we are let alone by the English, and our interests are not interfered with, we have certainly no cause to menace their Indian Empire."

In a similar strain, but in much more violent language, is composed an article in the *St. Petersburg Goloss*. According to this, the more advanced organ of the National party—"The commercial war already being waged between England and Russia, on the Northern frontiers of Afghanistan, is not at all unlikely to give way some day to a combat with more sanguinary weapons than weights and measures. In this case, the rifles presented to the Ameer by the Earl of Mayo would stand him in good stead, though for the matter of that, the Ameer, after taking pounds sterling, is quite as likely as not to try roubles for a change."

A Berlin correspondent of the *Times* remarks on the above:—

"I believe I am right in saying that the spirit manifested in these words pervades nearly all Russian utterances on the subject, much as the language used by the individual papers may vary. If an inference can be drawn from the attitude of the press and the tone of Russian society as to the policy likely to be pursued by the St. Petersburg Cabinet, it is not improbable that an attempt will be made to benefit by the advice contained in the concluding passage of the *Moscow Gazette*."

(D.)

RECENT HILL EXPEDITIONS.

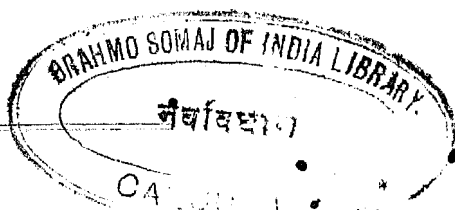
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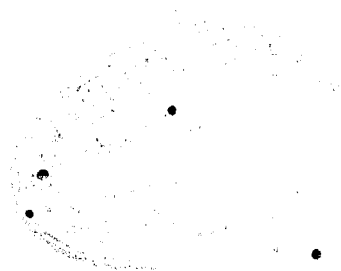
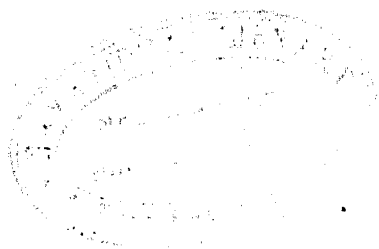
"In order somewhat to facilitate Colonel Keyes' incursion into the Bezotee country from Kohat, a strong demonstration was contemporaneously made from the Peshawur side. Successful as Colonel Keyes' inroad on the Bezotees" (on February 24th, 1869) "was, it is hardly to be correctly described as a surprise. The chastisement was actually given to a village for which it was not intended. It was intended for Dana Khoola, but fell upon Gara. The Mullicks of the so-called 'friendly Bezotees' who accompanied the party, had assured Captain Cavagnari and Colonel Keyes that no opposition was to be apprehended from the people of Gara, which is the first village within the natural fortress of the Ooblu. As the force approached Gara the Mullicks were sent ahead to warn the inhabitants that no harm would be done them unless provoked by their own conduct. Nevertheless, when Colonel Keyes came up he found the villagers busy removing their cattle and

families, and the force had no sooner got within range than some shots were fired at it. The village was then attacked and carried at once. A considerable number of the enemy were killed on the spot—Captain Cavagnari shooting two with his own hand—and the entire village destroyed, the grain burnt, and all the live-stock carried off. As the fugitives from Gara had taken the direction of Dana Khoola, there was clearly no chance of surprising the latter place, and accordingly the detachment returned, having inflicted probably ten times as much loss as it suffered, and, above all, having ‘lifted the *purdah*’ (the veil) of the Ooblun, the virgin fortress whose strength and inaccessibility had defied Coke and his successors, and been confidently vaunted all over the Hills as a nut that would always be too hard for British cracking.”*

In this chastisement and destruction of a village, “for which it was not intended”, our loss was thirty-three killed and wounded. In *Allen’s Indian Mail* of April 5th, 1869, the general opinion is said to be that the expedition was inconclusive, and that the Bezotees “have not learned their lesson as they should.” They certainly did not learn their lesson thoroughly on that occasion, for they were giving the British authorities “some annoyance” in April 1874,—see p. 54.

* The *Calcutta Pioneer*, extracted from the *Homeward Mail* of April 5th, 1869.







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