THE AFGHAN QUESTION

Reprinted from "The Eastern Question," by the Duke of Argyll.

THE AFGHAN QUESTION

FROM 1841 TO 1878

BY THE DUKE OF ARGYLL

STRAHAN & COMPANY LIMITED
34 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

All rights reserved

D378
.A7

Ballantyne Press
BALLANTYNE AND HANSON, EDINBURGH
CHANDOS STREET, LONDON

304349
22

22-24342

E. M. Dec. 2/22

PREFACE.

I REPUBLISH in a separate form those Chapters of my recent work on the History of the Eastern Question which refer to the conduct of the Government towards the late Ameer of Afghanistan.

In doing so, I had been prepared to alter any part of the narrative which might be shown to be incorrect, and to retract or to modify accordingly any of the charges against the Ministry and its Agents in India, which, if that narrative be accurate, are certainly not over-stated. But, although I have seen many hostile observations, I have not seen any attempt at a reply. It has not been denied that we have shuffled with our obligations under the Treaty of 1857. It has not been denied that the Viceroy, under instructions from home, prepared a new Treaty with the Ameer, which was built up of "tricky saving clauses." It has not been denied that the same high functionary gave one account of the effect

of this Treaty when speaking of it to the Ameer, and a directly opposite account when speaking of it to the Government at home. It has not been denied that the Viceroy dictated the discreditable communication addressed to the late Noor Mohammed, by Captain Grey. It is not denied that in the final letter to Shere Ali, for which the Cabinet is responsible, we made at least two statements, in respect to our own motives and conduct, which were disingenuous, and at least two accusations, as regards the conduct and language of the Ameer, which were absolutely false. It seems to be considered by those who support the policy of the Government, that it is a matter of no consequence whether these things are true or not, provided we have gained some new security against our own recurring fits of nervous panic on the subject of the advances of Russia.

It is more than probable, however, that a course of action which has been characterised by such conduct, will turn out to be as injurious as it has been immoral. We have yet to see the final results of the Afghan war. We have indeed hunted our victim, Shere Ali, to the death. We have overrun, with the most perfect ease, a great

portion of his country. But our "scientific frontier" is not yet defined. The wild tribes of Afghanistan have not been yet reconciled to our dominion. The cost and waste of our operations are enormous. We are throwing that cost and waste on the heavily burdened shoulders of the people of India. The finances of our Eastern Empire are in a condition raising the most serious anxieties for the future. We have diverted to the purposes of a foreign war, which was the direct consequence of our policy in Europe, taxation which we had promised to devote to insurance against the effects of famine. So long as we are under the necessity of holding a country very poor, very wild, and very far from the base of our operations, there is no possibility of effecting those economies, or those wiser outlays, which are demanded by the most vital interests of the people of India. The Minister of Finance has been obliged to confess that the whole subject of his great charge has been thrown into confusion, and that the Government cannot now tell, even approximately, what income will be required to meet the necessities of the State.

The catastrophe in Zululand has diverted for a time the public mind from every other anxiety.

That catastrophe has indeed been brought about by acts of almost unparalleled rashness. But at least in the policy of the High Commissioner towards Chetwayo, there is nothing worse than rashness to be ashamed of. Sir Bartle Frere is probably right in holding that sooner or later the armed and disciplined savagery of the Zulus would have had to be met and broken. He undertook the task without authority, and with means almost ridiculously inadequate. But he has had high aims in view. He has violated no Treaties. He has not repudiated any solemn pledges. He has not pretended that, in his ultimatum to Chetwayo, he was offering to that Chief exactly what he himself had long desired. Sir Bartle Frere has been high-handed, and perhaps wrong-headed. But he has been so in the interests of civilisation, and of a distant future. He has been open and straightforward in all his dealings, and has done nothing to compromise the honour of the Crown, or the fair name and fame of England. The Government, indeed, has had a technical right to repudiate his action. But they did not arrest that action when they had time to do so, and we may be sure there would have been no such repudiation had his action been successful.

When the scare of Isandlana has passed away, we shall awake once more to the far more serious problems involved in our new policy on the Frontiers of India, and to the embarrassments which must be entailed upon us by a long course of conduct devoid of conscience and of principle alike in Europe and in Asia.

ARGYLL.

CANNES, *April*, 1879.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

OUR RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN FROM THE FIRST AFGHAN WAR TO THE AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA IN 1873 1

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA IN 1873 TO THE FRERE NOTE IN JANUARY, 1875 90

CHAPTER III.

FROM JANUARY, 1875, TO THE BEGINNING OF THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD LYTTON IN APRIL, 1876 . . 137

CHAPTER IV.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD LYTTON, IN APRIL, 1876, TO THE OPENING OF THE PESHAWUR CONFERENCE ON THE 30TH JANUARY, 1877 179

CHAPTER V.

FROM THE PESHAWUR CONFERENCE IN JANUARY, 1877, TO THE WAR IN NOVEMBER, 1878 221

ERRATA.

Page 49, line 8 from bottom, *delete* "for many years."

„ 152, „ 12, *delete* "Secretary to the Government of the Punjaub."

„ 212, „ 14 from bottom, *for* "On or about the same day, the 22nd of October," *read* "About a month later."

CHAPTER I.

OUR RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN FROM THE FIRST AFGHAN WAR TO THE AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA IN 1873.

OUR Indian Empire is having a very marked effect on the national temper. We regard it with a passionate pride and with a passionate jealousy. These feelings are but slightly founded on any deliberate estimate of the good we may be doing there. That good may be very great, but the contemplation of it is an after-thought. It has been so with conquering races in all times. The spread of the Roman Empire carried with it the spread of Roman civilisation, and scattered wide over the world the seeds of Roman law. But this thought was not in the mind of Roman senators or of Roman generals. It did not inspire the march of Cæsar, or build the walls of Trajan. Many of those who are most proud and most jealous of India would be the first to disclaim, almost with disgust, the purely humanitarian estimate of our position in the East. They are not thinking, unless in a very secondary degree, of extended civilisation,—of the diffusion of Christian knowledge—of the wider area given

to just and equal laws. Neither the Schoolmaster, nor the Missionary, nor the Jurist, is the symbol of that which we adore. It is the Imperial Sceptre of the Moguls. It is the Throne of Delhi.

The small group of clever Englishmen who call themselves Positivists, and who bow down before the dry bones of Comte's Philosophy, have lately been good enough to intimate that they disapprove of our Indian Empire. It is always inspiriting to see the courage or the audacity of small minorities. If these writers would help to make their countrymen a little less nervous and a little more just, in questions affecting our interests in India, they would be doing good service. But if they preach the doctrine that we ought to have no interests and no duties there—then dogs baying at the moon are creatures employed in an avocation quite as useful and quite as hopeful. The pure Instinct of Dominion, unadulterated by any other feeling more rational than itself, is one of the very strongest of human passions. It has always been strongest with the strongest races ; and through them it has been the most powerful of all agencies in the history of human progress. Never perhaps has it had a more egitimate field of application than in the British conquest of India. That conquest came upon us unawares, without forethought and without design. It was begun by a few servants of a "Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies," and its strong foundations were laid by men who acted against the orders of Directors, against the policy of the Crown, and against the jealousy of Parliament. It grew out of the pure ascendency of

superior mind. It upset nothing which was worth preserving. The Mahomedan conquerors of India had spent their force, and the Empire they founded had sunk far in that irremediable decline which is now visibly affecting every Moslem Government in the world. The thrones of Hindostan had long been the prize of every Palace intriguer, or the prey of every soldier of fortune. Our conquest of India has not been effected by foreign troops, but mainly by the native races yielding themselves to our cause, and fighting for it with incorruptible devotion. The power of inspiring that devotion, and of yoking it to our service, are the best title and the best justification of the Empire which it has won.

But the pride of possession and the instinct of dominion, like all other primary passions of the mind, are liable to irrational excesses and dangerous abuse. And never has this abuse been more signally illustrated than in the temper of mind which has been engendered in a very large section of English politicians. In particular, the jealousy and the fear of Russia have become a mania. It dictates towards that Power a policy of chronic suspicion, only varied by paroxysms of undignified alarm. This is bad enough, but it is not the worst. The fact that Russia is a Power possessed of an Asiatic Empire much older than that of England, that she is advancing her possessions there from analogous causes and with like effects, and that she may therefore ultimately come into a geographical position coterminous with our own—this is a fact and a prospect which it is wise to bear in mind, and which must influence our conduct in many ways. But that influence

ceases to be safe or legitimate when it overbears every other consideration, and sits like a nightmare on every conception we have of our duties in foreign policy, whether in Europe or in Asia. It is not too much to say that this is what the fear and the hatred of Russia have come to be. On account of it, the Government of Lord Aberdeen was seriously blamed for not having widened the area of bloodshed in the Crimean contest, and for not having aimed at raising revolutionary wars in Poland and in the Caucasus. On account of it, we have a man so able and so experienced as Sir Henry Rawlinson implying regret that we had not then spent the blood and the treasure of England in securing the assistance and in establishing the independence of the most ruthless savages that exist in any portion of the world.* On account of it, we think it legitimate to support in Europe the corrupt and desolating Government of the Turks, and to proclaim openly that we consider the welfare of the subject populations of Turkey as a matter of secondary consideration. On account of it, forty years ago, we plunged into a most unrighteous war beyond the boundaries of India, shedding the blood, and interfering with the independence, of a people with whom we had not even a decent pretext of quarrel. On account of it, we desire that the vast spaces of Central Asia, with their few swarming areas of population, should be kept the perpetual hunting-ground of tribes whose whole business is to rob caravans and to steal men. On account of it, we exhibit ourselves to the princes and peoples of India as in a state of constant

---

See Memorandum, No. 12B, p. 31, in Afghanistan Corresp., 1878.

trepidation whenever some Kaufmann moves, and when he subjects to a Government comparatively civilised some barbarous Khan who has hitherto lived upon the Slave Trade. On account of it—and this is, perhaps, worst of all—we are now to see English Secretaries of State instructing the Viceroy of India to practise deceit in our dealings with a neighbour, and to make "ostensible" demands upon him which are to cover a direct breach of faith.

In "The Eastern Question"* we traced the working of this spirit in the politics of Europe. Let us now trace its workings in the politics of India.

Two separate narratives have been given to us, on the authority of her Majesty's Government, of the events and transactions which I am about to review. One of these is contained in Lord Lytton's Despatch, dated May 10th, 1877.† It was written at Simla when it became necessary for the Viceroy to give an account of his policy. The other of these narratives is contained in the despatch of Lord Cranbrook, dated November 18th, 1878.‡ It was published in the newspapers a fortnight before the Session of Parliament which began on the 5th December, 1878, when it became necessary for the Cabinet to present its policy in the most favourable aspect, and when, for that purpose, it was very important to anticipate the production of the Papers. Both of these narratives are misleading on matters of fundamental

* The Eastern Question, from the Treaty of Paris, 1856, to the Treaty of Berlin, 1878, and to the Second Afghan War. By the Duke of Argyll. Two Vols. Strahan & Co.

† Afghan Corresp. I. 1878, No. 36, p. 160.

‡ Ibid., No. 73, p. 260.

importance. Fully to expose all the inaccuracies woven into the very texture of these documents, it would be necessary to occupy much more space than I can here afford. But the narrative now presented will traverse both those other narratives at many points; and these will be noticed as we proceed. For convenience, and to avoid personality as far as it may be possible to do so, I shall refer to Lord Lytton's Despatch as the "Simla Narrative," and to Lord Cranbrook's Despatch as the "London Narrative."

The lesson on Frontier Policy which during many years most powerfully impressed the Anglo-Indian mind was the lesson read by that solitary horseman who, on the 13th of January, 1842, staggered, half-unconscious, into the gate of Jellalabad.* He was the sole survivor of a British army—the only man who, out of that army and out of all its followers, had escaped captivity or death. It may be true that the terrible completeness of this memorable catastrophe was due to the incapacity of the officers in command of the British Army of Occupation in Cabul. It is certainly true that, so far as the mere military honour and reputation of England is concerned, these were speedily re-asserted and vindicated with complete success. But it was impossible for the Indian Government of that time, and it is impossible for any historian of it now, to look back upon the political struggle in Afghanistan which had been gallantly maintained by Sir William Macnaghten and Sir Alexander Burnes, without seeing and feeling that the position in which we had been placed by Lord

* Kaye's War in Afghanistan, vol. ii. p. 217.

Palmerston's or Lord Auckland's Afghan expedition had been a thoroughly false position. We had interfered with the independence of a people with whose independence we had no right to interfere, and whose independence, moreover, it was above all things our interest to maintain. The particular object of our interference had been as foolish as it was unjust. We had opposed ourselves to a brave and an able Prince, and we had sought to set up in his stead a man who was naturally weak, and whom we had induced to be a traitor to his country and to his race. For this miserable purpose we had been drawing heavily on the resources of the people of India, and were involved in an undertaking which must have taxed those resources more and more. Above twenty millions of money had been spent out of the revenues of India, first in inducing, and then in retrieving, a great disaster. It is possible, indeed, that by reckless perseverance, and by an enormous military expenditure, we might have completed the conquest of Afghanistan. But the cost and the embarrassment of such a conquest, so far in advance of our own frontiers, of our resources, and of our bases of operation, had been brought home to the convictions of every statesman both in India and at home. With universal approbation, and with complete success, confession was made of the great error we had committed. We soon found it to be our best policy to swear friendship with the gallant man whom we had for a time expelled from his throne, and we made him during the rest of his life our firm and faithful ally.

But if that terrible Afghan expedition made an in-

delible impression on the minds of English and of Indian statesmen, we cannot wonder if it made an impression not less indelible on the minds of the Afghans. Not to dwell on the personal grievances which many of them had borne from the conduct of our men and officers when resident in the country—grievances which the historian of the war, however unwilling, has been compelled to mention—the proud chiefs of a proud race had seen us disposing of the Government of their country at our pleasure, pulling down one and setting up another. They had seen us conferring the Crown upon a man who at our instigation had consented to make her people tributary to their great enemy, Runjeet Singh, and to his Sikh Empire. Our Political Agents, wherever they were stationed, assumed to be, and actually were, the supreme governors of the country. It was impossible that the Afghans could assign this conduct to any other motive than a desire to subjugate their country, and reduce it to the condition of a province of our Empire. And if this impression was strong at the close of the Afghan war, there was much to keep it alive in subsequent events. We talk coolly of the gigantic strides—this is the stock phrase—made by Russia in her career of Asiatic conquest. But her gains have been as nothing to the gains of the British Empire during the same period in conquests and annexations.

The strides must be gigantic which an Empire takes when it has to cross deserts which are two thousand miles long by more than a thousand miles in breadth.*

---

* Rawlinson Memorandum, Afghan Corresp. I. 1878, p. 31.

But the gigantic length of such strides takes something out of the vigour of the organism which is impelled to make them, and does not necessarily bring it much nearer to new sources of vitality. During the forty years which have elapsed since the first Afghan war, we have conquered and annexed provinces containing many times more millions of men than exist in all the Khanates of Central Asia between the Volga and the Wall of China.* Afghans, who in their youth may have assisted in the massacres of Macnaghten and of Burnes, are not now old men. But they have lived to see the Government of British India annex Oude with eleven millions of population; conquer the Punjaub, with a population of more than seventeen millions; and subdue the country of the Ameers of Scinde, with a population of more than two millions. That is to say that within a period of less than forty years we have absorbed and conquered countries with a population of upwards of thirty millions. These are "gigantic strides" indeed, not "gigantic" like the strides of Russia, in the width and in the poverty of the distances traversed and of the regions gained,—but gigantic in the resources they have opened up, and in the treasures of which they have put us in possession. They are all annexations and conquests lying well into our

---

* The whole population of the immense stretch of country inhabited by the Tekeh Turcomans, which extends from Kizil Arvat to beyond Merve, is roughly calculated at about one million souls. See Article VIII. in *Quarterly Review*, January, 1879, which I think I cannot be wrong in assigning to the authorship of Sir Henry Rawlinson.

former possessions, filling up and consolidating the boundaries of Empire. They are Provinces prolific as recruiting grounds, and some of them rich in the resources of revenue. The Afghans have seen from their hill-tops all these leaps and bounds of British dominion, bringing that dominion close up to the foot of their own mountains, and giving ready access to the defiles by which their Capital is approached. Nor have they been unobservant spectators of the method by which some of these annexations have been brought about. They must have seen that this method has often stood in close connexion with the previous establishment of resident British officers, political or military, in the States which have been absorbed. The demands these officers have made on the Native Governments, the interferences they have practised with Native rule, the reports they have sent up of Native abuses and of Native maladministration, have been the usual and regular preliminaries of British annexation. And even where the internal independence of tributary or protected States is professedly respected it is notorious in India, and is well known to all our neighbours, that the presence of British officers in an official position in Native States—however necessary it may be for our purposes—is an arrangement which generally ends in making those officers the centre of authority.

It is in the light of these facts and of these memories that we are to estimate every jealousy of the Afghans, and every promise given to them in the way of reassurance by ourselves. It was our object to convince them of the reality of our reformed intentions, and of

the sincerity with which we desired to avoid for the future every approach to interference. The pledges on this subject which we gave with a view to regain their confidence are to be construed in the spirit as well as in the letter. We knew what they had in their minds, and they knew what we had in ours. The Treaty concluded by Lord Dalhousie with Dost Mohammed, in 1855, was signed and negotiated by Sir John Lawrence as Chief Commissioner of the Punjaub. In him the restored Sovereign of Cabul had to deal with one whose powerful character, and whose resolute sincerity of purpose, constitute the very type of all that is best and noblest in the Indian Services. Through him mainly the confidence of the Ameer was securely gained; and it is important to observe what the engagement on our part was which Dalhousie and Lawrence knew to be the one most desired. The first Article of the Treaty may be considered formal; but the second contains the promise which was the price of friendship. We promised to respect the territories then in the possession of the Ameer, "and never to interfere therein."* In the third Article a similar engagement on the part of the Ameer towards us and towards our territories, gave a sort of diplomatic reciprocity to the transaction: but in the third Article the Ameer gave a pledge to us for which in reality there was no other return on our part than the promise we had given in the second. For at the conclusion of the third Article, after the words of mere

* Ibid., No. 1, p. 1.

reciprocity, these words were added as a special engagement on the part of the Ameer,—"and to be the friend of the friends and enemy of the enemies of the Honourable East India Company." This was a really onerous undertaking on the part of the Ameer, and one which was of great value to us. It was a Treaty binding him to assist us against all enemies, whilst on our part it was a Treaty involving no similar obligation towards the Ameer. As against the Ameer it was a Treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive. As against us, it had no such character. In this respect the covenant was essentially one-sided. And yet the Ameer did not hesitate to sign it—under no other inducement than the one great promise we gave him in the second clause, that we should never interfere in his dominions.

The next Treaty which we concluded with Dost Mohammed was one which arose out of a temporary cause, and the greater part of which ceased to be operative when that cause had been removed. England in 1857 went to war with Persia on account of the seizure of Herat by that Power, and on account of the farther intentions which were ascribed to it of attacking the possessions of Dost Mohammed. We agreed to subsidise the Ameer largely during the war with Persia to enable him to defend his territories. But we gave this subsidy on conditions. The object of these conditions was to see that the money was properly applied to the purposes of defence for which it was given. There was no other possible method of doing this than that of sending British officers with suitable

establishments to the cities and frontiers of Cabul, wherever an Afghan army might be assembled to act against the Persians. Accordingly, a Treaty was concluded for this purpose on the 26th of January, 1857. By the fourth Article, British officers were to be our Agents in Afghanistan for the prosecution of that particular war. But this was strictly the limit of their Mission, both as regarded their duties, and as regarded the spots at which they were to be stationed. Three places, and three places only, were specifically mentioned as points where British officers might be stationed. These were Cabul, Kandahar, and Balkh. But the sole purpose of the Mission was still more clearly indicated in the words which followed—"or wherever an Afghan army may be established against the Persians." Their duty was specified with equal jealousy. "It will be their duty to see generally that the subsidy granted to the Ameer be devoted to the military purpose for which it is given, and to keep their own Government informed of all affairs."* But even this was not deemed enough. Lest it should be construed as even approaching "interference," the same Article limited the information which the Ameer promised to give our officers to "all military and political matters connected with the war." And yet, although this mission of British officers into Cabul was for the purpose of defending the Ameer, or of assisting him at least to defend himself, so clearly was it recognised as an arrangement

* Ibid., No. 2, p. 2.

which in itself would be distasteful to the Ameer, and a departure from the promises given in the previous and permanent Treaty of 1855, that a special Article, the seventh, was inserted in the new Treaty, expressly providing that, "Whenever the subsidy should cease, the British officers were to be withdrawn from the Ameer's country."

There could be no more emphatic testimony than this as to the understanding both of the Ameer and of the Indian Government as to inseparable connexion between the residence of British officers in the Afghan country and the "interference" which we had promised never to repeat. But the seventh Article does not end there. It proceeds to indicate another arrangement which would be in consonance with the promises of 1855, and which, therefore, it was agreed by both parties might be adopted instead of that which was forbidden. The Ameer did not desire to be without official intercourse with the British Government. But he did desire, above all things, that such intercourse should not be carried on through a British, that is to say, a European officer, resident in Afghanistan. Accordingly, the seventh Article concluded by declaring it to be understood that the British Government might at its pleasure appoint an Agent (Vakil) at Cabul, with the express reservation and condition in respect to the nationality of such Agent, that he was "not to be a European officer."*

---

* Ibid., p. 2.

There could be no more conclusive evidence than this of the complete understanding of both contracting parties as to what was, and as to what was not, consistent with the solemn promise we had given to Dost Mohammed "never to interfere" in his dominions. And it is the more important to observe this evidence, as it is contained in an Article of the Treaty of 1857, which necessarily survives all the Articles which were of a purely temporary character. It remained as binding on us in 1878 as it was in 1857.

There are few parts of the Simla Narrative more inaccurate than the paragraphs in which it refers to this Treaty of 1857. I must add that there are few parts of it in which the inaccuracies have a more obvious bearing upon the object with which that Narrative was composed. That object was to defend a policy of insisting on the residence of British officers as Political Agents in Afghanistan. For this purpose it is, of course, convenient so to represent the transactions recorded in the Treaty of 1857 as to give them the aspect of a precedent. But in order to support this view it is necessary either wholly to suppress, or to throw into the shade, those parts of the Treaty which define and limit so very strictly the duties assigned to the British officers who were then to be sent into Afghanistan. Accordingly, in the Simla Narrative (paragraphs 3, 4) all this is boldly and at the same time dexterously done. There is no mention whatever made of the principal duty of the officers—namely, that of seeing that the subsidy was applied to the purposes

for which it was given. This limitation of the Treaty is suppressed. Next, in obvious connexion with the same purpose, exaggerated prominence is given to the duty of "keeping the Indian Government informed of all affairs"—this duty being so represented as if it were the principal one,—as it would be the principal duty of officers sent as Residents. Again, no mention is made of the limitation of the Article at its close—a limitation which distinctly points to "matters connected with the war" as the only matters on which the Ameer was to keep our officers informed. But, lastly—and this is worst of all—in the Simla Narrative a duty is expressly assigned to our "officers" under the Treaty of 1857, which is not only not included in the Treaty, but which is therein expressly excluded. It so happens, moreover, that is precisely the kind of duty for which it was most desirable to assert a precedent. The words of the Simla Narrative are these:—"Their duty (in the performance of which the Ameer was expected to afford them every facility) being simply to give advice when required, and to obtain all the information needed by our Government."* Now, the words of the Treaty carefully and expressly exclude this duty of "advice," which the Simla Narrative as carefully and as expressly asserts. The words of the Treaty are these:—"They will have nothing to do with the payment of the troops, or advising the Cabul Government." (Art. 4.)† It cannot, therefore, be too

---

* Ibid., p. 160. † Ibid., p. 2.

emphatically asserted, that so far from the Treaty of 1857 affording any precedent for attempting to force European officers upon the Ameers of Afghanistan, as our Agents in the country for any purpose whatever, the Treaty of 1857, on the contrary, proves to demonstration that we bound ourselves not to do so, and placed on record in a solemn Treaty our full and free acquiescence in that well-known policy of the Afghan Government, which made them irreconcilably hostile to any such arrangement.

We have the evidence of Lord Lawrence, that when he personally met Dost Mohammed at Peshawur in February, 1857, immediately after the conclusion of this Treaty, the Ameer showed no inclination to regard with any favour even such interference on the part of the British Government as might be required to secure his own dynastic succession, and thus avert the evils of civil war. He told Sir J. Lawrence "that it was his wish and the earnest desire of all Afghans that we should not interfere in their quarrels, but should allow them to manage their own concerns and to fight out and settle their own domestic broils in their own way."* The attempt to settle those feuds in our way had, indeed, not been so successful as to hold out any inducement to the Indian Government to try the experiment again.

It was in compliance, therefore, not only with the settled policy, but with the definite engagements of the British Government, that when in June, 1863, Dost

* Ibid., p. 60.

Mohammed died, and a contest arose among the members of his family for the vacant throne, the Indian Government acknowledged the right of the Afghan Chiefs and people to settle the right of succession for themselves. It was impossible for us to settle it. We had not the knowledge enabling us to do so with justice, or with any prospect of success. Even, if we could be sure of the best man, he might very easily become the worst on account of our patronage. The Afghans had not forgotten the disgraceful conditions to which we had forced Shah Soojah to submit, as our client, and as the vassal of the Sikhs. Presumably the best Ruler of Afghanistan would be the man who in such a contest should, without any help from us, prove himself to be the strongest.

There is, however, in such matters no possibility of acting upon any rule so absolute as to dispense with the exercise of some discretion. It is obvious that the policy of recognising every Ruler of Cabul who was able to make good his position, and had secured the allegiance of the people, was a policy which left open to the Government of India the exercise of a very important, and, it might be, of a very difficult discretion, namely, that of deciding on the measure of success which was to be regarded as conferring on any one of the contending Princes a fair claim to be recognised as *de facto* Ameer. In the condition of society which prevails in Afghanistan, it is impossible to be sure of the permanence of any victory, or to foresee the counter-revolutions which may arise. Defeated Chiefs have the habit of retiring to the protection of neighbouring and

rival Governments, and of thence emerging as opportunities may arise, to gain or re-establish their ascendency. It was therefore perfectly consistent with the declared policy of the Government of India to prolong or to cut short, in each particular case, the period of suspense, and to confer the benefit of its recognition, whatever that might be, upon any Ruler whom it could fairly regard as having won his crown.

The action taken by the Government of India on the death of Dost Mohammed, and during the civil war which followed, was governed by an honest desire to do what was just and prudent. The severe illness of the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, at the moment when Shere Ali announced his father's death and his own succession to the throne, together with the doubts entertained as to the security of his position, led to some delay in acknowledging him as Ameer of Cabul. But as he had been designated to the succession by his father, and as he was in actual possession of Cabul, this recognition was accorded to him by the acting Governor-General, Sir William Denison, on the 23rd of December, 1863.*

When Sir J. Lawrence assumed the Government of India, in the same month, as successor of Lord Elgin, he found this question settled and this recognition given. After nearly two years and a half of civil war, however, the fortunes of Shere Ali were reduced to so low an ebb that the British native Agent at Cabul, overstepping the limits of his functions, was induced to make overtures of

* Ibid., p. 8.

friendship on behalf of the British Government to Sirdar Azim Khan, one of the rival brothers. For this act he was recalled by the Government of India, and Sir J. Lawrence recorded in a despatch, dated the 21st April, 1866, his opinion that "the cause of the Ameer Shere Ali was by no means finally lost, and that the Government considered that until such a result was reached, they were bound equally by good faith and by considerations of policy to recognise no other chief as Ameer of Afghanistan."* At last, however—in February, 1867—Shere Ali was driven from Cabul, and took refuge in Herat. The Government of India then thought it necessary to recognise the successful brother as Ameer of Cabul and Candahar, but continuing to recognise Shere Ali as Ameer of the Province of Herat, of which he still held possession.†

Sir J. Lawrence explained to Ufzul Khan that the British Government deplored the dissensions of the great Barukzye House, and the calamities they had brought on the Afghan people: that though the Viceroy felt pity for Shere Ali Khan, he was disposed to hail hopefully any event which might bring Afghanistan nearer to the attainment of a strong Government. He assured Ufzul Khan that he had not interfered by any secret aid to Shere Ali, as had been falsely alleged. He gave him to understand that the recognition of the British Government was due to nothing but his own gallantry and success; and he declared that if, unhappily, the struggle

* Ibid., p. 9. † Ibid., No. 7, pp. 12, 13.

for supremacy was not concluded, the Viceroy would pursue the same course of siding with neither party.

It is important to observe that in this official communication to the new Ameer, Ufzul Khan, the Viceroy of India was careful to intimate still more in detail his own scrupulous adherence to the promises given in 1856 and in 1857 to Dost Mohammed. He reminded the Ameer of the seventh Article of the Treaty of 1857, which entitled the British Government to accredit to Cabul "a Vakeel," not a European officer; he intimated that in accordance with this provision of the Treaty, "a Mahomedan gentleman of rank and character would be deputed as representative of the Viceroy at his Highness' Court."*

It has been represented in recent controversy that this policy of abstention and non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan was a policy founded entirely on local considerations, and did not take into contemplation the questions which were looming in the distance beyond the farthest boundaries of that country. But there is no truth whatever in this representation. The advances of Russia in Central Asia, and also the possibility of her acting as she had already done through the agency of Persia, were contingencies not only present to the mind of Sir J. Lawrence and of his Council, but expressly referred to as an important element in the consideration of the best and safest course to be pursued. With reference to both contingencies, he considered non-

* Ibid., p. 14.

interference in the Afghan civil war expedient, because whatever Ruler might gain the upper hand would be disposed by the necessities of his position to rely rather upon the British Government than upon any other Power; and because whatever temporary alliances he might have been induced to form during the contest would probably be abandoned when he had attained success. But in the contrary event Sir J. Lawrence did not intend to bind himself to the same course. On the contrary, the Viceroy never had it out of view that any external interference on the part of other Governments with the affairs of Afghanistan, or any intriguing on the part of its Rulers with our enemies beyond, would of necessity bring the policy of abstention to an end, and would compel us to adopt counter-movements. Accordingly, when in September, 1867, reports reached the Government of India that Shere Ali, then Ameer or Ruler of Herat, was entering into intrigues with Persia, the Viceroy and his Council at once expressed their opinion in an important despatch to the Government at home,* that it "might be highly for the interests of British India to declare the Treaty then subsisting between us and Shere Ali at an end," and openly to assist his opponents at Cabul, with money and with arms, if they were at all likely to form a stable rule. In pursuance of this policy, —not of abstention, but of active interference,—Shere Ali was warned by the Viceroy, that if he allied himself with Persia, the British Government would at once take part against him.†

* Ibid., No. 10, pp. 18, 20. † Ibid., paras. 6, 7, pp. 19, 20.

It was in this despatch that the Government of India first drew special attention to the advances of Russia in Central Asia, which Sir J. Lawrence and his colleagues said had been lately rapid, and which had from time to time been forced upon their notice. It was pointed out that the influence of Russia would soon be, or had already become, paramount in Samarcand and Bokhara, as for some time past it had been in Kokhand. It was in this despatch also that the Viceroy suggested to Her Majesty's Cabinet the expediency of coming to some understanding, or even some engagement with the Government of Russia, which would enable us to look without anxiety or apprehension at the proceedings of Russia on her southern frontier, and to welcome the civilising effects of her Government on the wild Turks of the Steppe, and on the bigoted and exclusive Governments of Bokhara and Kokhand; while Russia, on the other hand, assured of our loyal feeling in the matter, would have no jealousy in respect of our alliance with the Afghan and neighbouring tribes. The principle indicated as the basis of such an agreement was this: "that up to a certain border the relations of the respective Governments should be openly acknowledged and admitted as bringing them into necessary contact and Treaty with the Tribes and Nations on the several sides of such a line."*

In the face of this despatch it is impossible to contend that the Government of India, under Sir J. Lawrence,

* Ibid., pp. 20, 1.

was not fully awake to the contingencies arising out of the progress of Russia in Central Asia. And be it observed, that no subsequent event has brought these contingencies nearer home than the events indicated by Sir J. Lawrence and his colleagues. Bokhara is a country actually marching with Afghanistan for many hundred miles, and the paramount influence of Russia there is a much more significant fact than her advance on distant Khiva, or the absorption of a part of that Khanate into her own dominions. In all the revolutions of Afghanistan Bokhara had played an important part. It has been the refuge of every fugitive Ameer, and the two States have with each other many hereditary causes of difference and quarrel. Yet the Minister, who was my own immediate predecessor in the India Office—Sir Stafford Northcote—after a cordial and intelligent approval of Sir J. Lawrence's policy in respect to our relations with Afghanistan, replied on the 26th December, 1867, to the Government of India in a spirit of the utmost incredulity as to the existence of any danger from the advances of Russia: "Upon this point Her Majesty's Government see no reason for any uneasiness or for any jealousy. The conquests which Russia has made, and apparently is still making in Central Asia, appear to them to be the natural result of the circumstances in which she finds herself placed, and to afford no ground whatever for representations indicative of suspicion or alarm on the part of this country. Friendly communications have at various times passed between the two Governments on the subject, and should an

opportunity offer, Her Majesty's Government will avail themselves of it for the purpose of obviating any possible danger of misunderstanding, either with respect to the proceedings of Russia or to those of England. This is all that it appears necessary or desirable to do."* It will be seen that this confidence was expressed not only in view of the fact that Russia had made rapid advances in Central Asia, but also in the calmest contemplation of the probability that she was likely to make more. It was all in the natural course of things, and Her Majesty's Government had no anxieties on the subject.

In the meantime—on the 7th of October, 1867—the Ameer Ufzul Khan died at Cabul, and his brother Azam Khan was elected in his stead. This succession was at once acknowledged by the Government of India on the 13th of November, 1867.† It was followed, however, by an immediate renewal of the civil war, by a sudden revival of the cause of Shere Ali, and by a revolution which, in the course of nine months, restored him to his father's throne. On the 8th of September, 1868, he took triumphant possession of Cabul, and lost no time in announcing to the Viceroy of India his desire to continue the relations of amity and friendship which had been established between the two States.‡

The Viceroy replied to this intimation on the 2nd of October, in a frank and friendly letter, expressing his sorrow that the family of his great father, Dost Moham-

---

* Ibid., No. 12, pp. 24, 26. † Ibid., p. 24.
‡ Ibid., No. 13, Inclos. 2, p. 43.

med, should have been broken up into contending factions, advising him to deal leniently with those who had opposed him, and assuring him that he was prepared not only to maintain the bonds of amity and goodwill which had been established with his father, but "so far as was practicable" to strengthen them.* In proof of this disposition Sir John Lawrence very soon after, in the same month of September, 1868, proceeded to assist Shere Ali with money to the extent of £60,000, as well as with a supply of arms. This assistance was so important at the time that Shere Ali publicly acknowledged at a later time that it materially contributed to the completion of his success and to the consolidation of his power.

It is curious that a little more than two months before this event, but at a time when the success of Shere Ali had become probable, Sir Henry Rawlinson had written an able and elaborate Memorandum, in which he endeavoured to arouse the languid interest and the slumbering alarms of the Secretary of State for India on the Central Asian Question. From his well-known point of view, he urged the immediate importance which attached to the Russian victories in Bokhara, and the necessity of taking certain measures of precaution. Of these measures, the first was simply the immediate recognition and active support of Shere Ali, by subsidies and by the close association of British representation at Cabul; the second was the re-establishment of our lost influence at the Court of Persia; and the third was the completion of our

* Ibid., Inclos. 3, p. 43.

Indian military lines of railway leading to the frontier. A fourth measure was indeed suggested, and that was the occupation of Quetta at the western end of the Bolan Pass. But the distinguished author of this Memorandum distinctly declared that unless this step could be taken with the cordial approval of the Ruler and Chiefs of Afghanistan, he was not prepared to recommend it, and considered that if the tribes in general regarded it as a menace, or as a preliminary to a farther hostile advance, we should not be justified for so small an object in risking the rupture of our friendly intercourse.*

This Memorandum, dated 20th July, seems to have been forwarded on 21st August, 1868, to the Government of India by Sir Stafford Northcote, the Secretary of State, unaccompanied by any expression of his own opinion, or of the opinion of her Majesty's Government.† That opinion, therefore, so far as known to the Government of India, remained as it had been set forth in the despatch of December, 1867. This is very remarkable, because the Memorandum of Sir H. Rawlinson was full not only of what Russia had done, but of the alleged violation of promises which had been involved in doing it. It referred to the pacific Manifesto published by Prince Gortchakow in 1864, declaring that recent annexations had taken place against the will of the Government, and asserting with categorical precision that the expansion of the Empire had now reached its limit. It assumed—or without directly assuming, it implied—that these declarations or

---

* Ibid., p. 41. † Ibid., p. 31, foot-note.

intimations of policy and of intention were "promises" in the sense of being engagements taken towards other Powers. It reminded the Government that the "ink had been hardly dry with which this Manifesto was written before its specific promises were completely stultified." It pointed out how hostilities had been almost immediately resumed in the valley of the Jaxartes; how Chemkend and Tashkend and Khojend had been captured in succession; how Romanofski had proceeded to invade Bokhara, and had established the Russian power within hail of Samarcand. All these proceedings were denounced in the Memorandum as "flagrant departures" from Prince Gortchakow's Manifesto, and as having been adopted under "various pretexts."* Nevertheless under all this fire of warning, and a perfect tempest of prediction, the Cabinet of Mr. Disraeli gave no sign,—allowed their expressed confidence in Russia to remain on record as a dissent even from the guarded suggestions of Sir John Lawrence, and simply forwarded the Rawlinson Memorandum to form the subject of elaborate Minutes by the Viceroy and his Counsellors.

Sir H. Rawlinson, in a late edition of his work "England and Russia in the East," has indicated his impression that the action of Lord Lawrence in subsidising Shere Ali was due to the influence of his Memorandum, and he describes that action as one which "threw to the winds at once and for ever the famous policy of masterly inactivity."† The dates, however, do not favour

* Ibid., pp. 31, 32.

† Chap. VI., p. 302.

this view, because the Memorandum was only sent from England on the 21st of August, and does not seem to have been under the consideration of the Government of India when Lord Lawrence determined to subsidise the Ameer. The truth is that Sir H. Rawlinson has always misconceived what the Lawrence policy was, and very naturally regards as departures from it, acts which were really in complete accordance with its fundamental object and intention. We have already seen that so early as 1867 Sir J. Lawrence had spoken of subsidising any Ruler at Cabul whom, for any reason, it might be our interest to support. The aid he gave to Shere Ali in September, 1868, was in perfect consistency with the plan of helping any *de facto* Ruler, and of keeping ourselves free to judge according to circumstances, of the measure of success which sufficiently indicated possession of power, and the assent of the Afghan people. Sir J. Lawrence was not the man to lay down for himself any such wooden rules as have been ascribed to him by ignorant friends and zealous opponents.

Such was the position of the Central Asian Question in connexion with the declared policy of the British Government when the Cabinet of Mr. Gladstone came into power. In that Cabinet I had the honour of being Secretary of State for India, and was the organ of the Administration in Indian affairs during the whole of the Viceroyalty of Lord Mayo, and during two years of the Viceroyalty of Lord Northbrook. In Lord Mayo we had to deal with a new Viceroy who had been sent out by our predecessors in office, and who had actually left

England to assume his government before we had ourselves received our appointments from the Queen. I had not therefore the advantage of having any personal communication whatever with Lord Mayo, or of ascertaining from him any one of his opinions on any Indian question, or of expressing to him any opinions of my own. I mention this not at all by way of complaint, for it was the result of peculiar and accidental circumstances; but for the purpose of explaining how it was that of necessity more than usual remained to be done by means of private letters. I call these letters private letters only to distinguish them from formal despatches, because they were not the letters of a private friend on the personal aspect of public questions. It so happens that I had never enjoyed the honour and advantage of Lord Mayo's acquaintance. Our communications, therefore, were essentially of an official character, although in a form which admitted of the more free handling of delicate affairs, sometimes containing passages which were confidential then, and must remain confidential still. Some of these letters are referred to in the despatches which have been lately published as essential parts of our official intercourse. The Viceroy's letters to me were very full, and as I soon found that our views were in complete accordance, I am able to present the following account of our policy, and of what was done in pursuance of it, drawn mainly from the circumstantial details given by himself.

And here I must begin by pointing out another of the innumerable inaccuracies of the London Narrative.

It is one which concerns a very important point, and one which, as usual, has a direct connexion with the views which it was convenient for the Government to present. They have departed, as I am about to show, from Lord Mayo's policy quite as much as from the policy of Lord Lawrence. In order to defend this departure it is their interest to make out that circumstances have greatly altered, and in particular, that Lord Mayo had not to deal with those "gigantic strides" of Russia which, it is implied, are of later date. I have already pointed out that there is no foundation whatever for this representation of the historical facts. Yet in the fourth paragraph* of the London Narrative this erroneous representation is made in the broadest terms. Referring to the period of Lord Lawrence's administration it says: "The outposts of Russia were then distant from the borders of Afghanistan." The fact, on the contrary, I believe to be, that the Russian outposts which are nearest to Afghanistan —namely, those which she acquired in the subjection of Bokhara—were then almost exactly where they are now. When Lord Mayo succeeded to the Viceroyalty of India, Russia had completed every one of those conquests which were most formidable as regarded the interests of India. During no previous period had her "steps" been more gigantic than during the four years from 1864 to 1869. In 1865 the Russians had taken Tashkend. In 1866 they had taken Khojend and had broken the power of the Khanat of Kokhand. In 1867 they had invaded

* Afghan Corresp. I. 1878, No. 73, p. 261.

Bokhara, and had established fortified positions far south of the Jaxartes. In the same year they had established the new Province of Turkistan, and had erected it into a separate Viceroyalty with Tashkend for its Capital. In 1868 they had taken Samarcand, and had established complete power over the Khanate of Bokhara.

This conquest, and the establishment of this power, virtually brought Russia into contact with Afghanistan. No later Russian movement in Central Asia is to be compared in importance with this movement which had been completed in 1869. Sir Henry Rawlinson was quite right when he pointed out in his Memorandum the peculiar significance of Russian domination in Bokhara. It meant Russian domination over a Government which marched with Afghanistan along the greater part of its northern frontier, and which had special relations with the people and Rulers of Cabul. What, then, are we to say of the accuracy of the London Narrative when (para. 7) it says, speaking of the early days of Lord Mayo's Government, "The advances of Russia in Central Asia had not, up to this period, assumed dimensions such as to cause uneasiness to the Indian Government?" No doubt there is an ambiguity in this phrase. It might be construed to mean that the Indian Government had not, as a matter of fact, felt uneasiness. Even this is not correct, as Sir J. Lawrence's Despatch of 1867 proves. But its real meaning evidently is that the advances of Russia had not then "assumed dimensions" sufficiently large to attract much attention, and that later advances have wholly altered the position. The fact is that no later advances

have been made by Russia comparable in importance to those which made her mistress of Bokhara and Kokhand. And another fact is that the Indian Government had its eyes wide awake to the significance of these events, and that Lord Mayo's policy was deliberately adopted in full contemplation of all the possible dangers they might involve. If the Government of India felt no serious alarm on account of these events it was because that Government consisted at that time of men with some nerve, and with some common sense.

It is a curious illustration of the historical accuracy as well as of the argumentative value of this 7th paragraph of the London Narrative, that the leading expeditionary columns which were directed in 1878 by Russia towards the frontiers of Afghanistan, moved from territories which had been either actually or virtually acquired in 1869, and that no military movement was found practicable from the Caspian base.*

Although the specific measures which were summarised in the last paragraph of the Rawlinson Memorandum were not in themselves of any very formidable kind, and although the first and most important of them,—the recognition and support of Shere Ali,—had actually been adopted by Sir J. Lawrence and his Government before or about the time of the arrival of the Memorandum in India; yet the general tone of the Memorandum, and

* One of the columns was to move from a point on the borders of Kokhand, and a small remnant of this once-powerful Khanate was allowed by Russia to remain nominally independent till 1876. But this remnant had been completely at the mercy of Russia since 1867.

the ulterior measures which it indicated for the future, led to its being closely criticised by the Government of India, and by many of the most able and experienced officers to whom it was referred by the Viceroy. The general result was summed up in a despatch, signed by Sir John Lawrence and his Council, addressed to me, and dated the 4th of January, 1869. They were strongly adverse to any advance, beyond our own frontier, on political, on military, and on financial grounds. They declared for the policy of husbanding the resources of India, and not wasting them on costly and difficult expeditions, or in the maintenance of distant outposts. They objected to any active interference in the affairs of Afghanistan by the deputation of British officers, or to the occupation, whether forcible or amicable, of any post or tract in that country, as a measure sure to engender irritation, defiance, and hatred, in the minds of Afghans. On the other hand, they agreed with the Rawlinson Memorandum in desiring that greater attention in the interests of India should be paid to the strength and character of our Mission to Teheran. They announced that the Government of India had already conferred upon Shere Ali a subsidy of six lacs of rupees, and was prepared to give him arms. They requested authority to repeat this kind and measure of support at the discretion of the Government of India. With regard to the advances of Russia in Central Asia, they repeated the recommendation that some clear understanding should be come to with the Court of St. Petersburg as to its projects and designs in those regions. They complained that this

subject had been pressed on Sir Stafford Northcote without any result, except his despatch of December, 1867. And, finally, they advised that Russia should be told, in firm but courteous language, that she cannot be permitted to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan, or in those of any State which lies contiguous to our frontier.*

Such was the policy which Lord Mayo found the Government of India had declared to be its own when he assumed the functions of his great office. It was a policy distinct and definite both in its negative and affirmative aspect; both in the things which it proposed to do, and in the things which it resolutely refused to undertake. It was in pursuance of this policy that Lord Clarendon began those negotiations with the Cabinet of St. Petersburg which had for their object some understanding and agreement respecting the limits not only of our respective possessions in Asia, but also, beyond these, of our respective fields of predominant influence. It was in pursuance of the same policy in its Indian branch that Lord Mayo had immediately to prepare for a personal meeting with the Ameer of Cabul, a meeting which had been suggested and sought by Shere Ali, and which Sir John Lawrence had recommended to the favourable consideration of his successor.

On the 26th January, 1869, Lord Mayo wrote to me the first letter in which he indicated his views in respect to our policy towards the Ameer. It is remarkable as indicating incidentally (1) that he recognised the utility

* Ibid., No. 14, pp. 43-5.

of having a European official in Cabul, if this measure could properly be adopted; (2) that he did not consider the difficulties in the way of it as difficulties that would be necessarily permanent; and (3) that he was fully aware of the fact that, as matters then stood, it would be inexpedient to attempt it. On this subject his language was as follows:—"With the friendly feelings that Shere Ali entertains towards us in consequence of the assistance in money and arms that we have given him, we may, without sending at present any European official to Cabul, exercise sufficient influence over him to keep him on the most amicable terms with us." It is clear from this passage that Lord Mayo had this question fully before him, and that what he was about to determine in regard to it, was so determined on overruling considerations of policy or of good faith.

On the 30th of January, 1869, a letter was addressed to the Viceroy by Sir Donald Macleod, Lieut.-Governor of the Punjaub, informing him that the defeat of Azim Khan, and of his nephew Abdul Raman Khan, had terminated the civil war in Afghanistan, but that the portion of country north of the Hindoo Koosh, commonly called Afghan Turkistan, remained but imperfectly subject to the Ameer Shere Ali. Macleod added that "this district was likely ere long to become the area of intrigue on the part of the Russians, whose high officials avowed that their projects comprised the whole country up to the Hindoo Koosh." He further informed the Viceroy that the Ameer was most anxious to arrange an interview, and that he was so set upon it that, in all probability, if it were

necessary, Shere Ali would even be prepared to undertake a journey to Calcutta.

This communication was forwarded to me by Lord Mayo in a letter, dated the 7th of February, in which he informed me that he expected to be able to arrange for the desired interview, and that, if it were prudently conducted, he anticipated great good as its result. In particular, he explained that he anticipated that a considerable effect would be produced "throughout all Central Asia."

This letter, added to the facts which have been already narrated, puts a final extinguisher on the plea which has been already dealt with on a previous page, that Lord Mayo's policy is out of date because it was before the advances of Russia in Central Asia had become serious, or had attracted the attention they deserved. The recent establishment of Russian influence in Bokhara, on the very borders of Afghanistan, the Memorandum of Sir H. Rawlinson, and the discussions in India to which it had given rise, the alarming intimation freshly conveyed by Sir D. Macleod that Russian high officials were claiming Afghan Turkistan as one of their legitimate fields of operation, and Lord Mayo's own explanation above given of the importance he attached to his coming interview with the Ameer—all prove conclusively that the Central Asian Question in its most urgent aspects was fully before Lord Mayo in 1869, and that the policy he pursued was the policy which he considered the wisest and the best in full view of all the contingencies of a close Russian approach to the borders of India.

Nor is this all: the same letter of the 7th of February shows that Lord Mayo was exposed to all those influences of an excited atmosphere of opinion which, under such circumstances, are apt not only to disturb the judgment, but to pervert the moral sense. In that letter, Lord Mayo informed me that the Press of India was teeming with articles representing Shere Ali as "completely in the hands of Russia and of Persia." Reports and assertions of this kind, the offspring of Barracks and of Bazaars, are never wanting. They have very often a tremendous effect upon nervous politicians, inspiring them with silly fears and incurable suspicions. Let it then be clearly understood what were the circumstances under which Lord Mayo went into the Umballa Conference, and in the full contemplation of which he deliberately shaped his course. He knew all the dangers—when he determined not to bully. He knew all the suspicions—when he determined to be himself perfectly truthful and sincere. He knew all the fresh advances which Russia had been making, and the farther advances she had still to make—when he resolved to keep with absolute good faith all the promises, whether verbal or written, which had been given by those who had preceded him in the great office of Viceroy of India.

On the 2nd, and again on the 8th of March, Lord Mayo addressed to me farther communications on the approaching Conference, which had then been arranged for the 25th of that month. In the first of these he repeated an expression of the importance he attached to it, not only as likely to have the most beneficial effect

on public opinion in Central Asia, Persia, and Hindostan, but also as likely to lead to some definite arrangement with the Ameer. The nature of that arrangement he explained to be, that we should assist him to form a strong and durable Government, whilst he, on the other hand, was to give facilities to our trade, and to maintain order on those portions of our frontier over which he had any influence. Lord Mayo, however, declared himself to be entirely opposed to any attempt being made "to take any direct part in the internal affairs of Afghanistan." In the second letter, the Viceroy specified further, as one of the objects he had in view, "the obtaining of accurate information as to the events that occur in Central Asia." So that this aspect also of the value to be attached to the presence of British officers in Cabul, was fully in the Viceroy's mind before he went to the Umballa Conference.

Two days later, on the 10th of March, Lord Mayo wrote to me another letter on the same subject, entering more fully into an explanation of his views: "With regard to the approaching interview with the Ameer, my intention is to avoid any engagements of a permanent character. I am opposed to Treaties and subsidies. Sir J. Lawrence gave him 60,000*l.*, and had engaged to give him 60,000*l.* more. This probably placed him on the throne, as it enabled him to pay his army, which his rival could not do, and he is, I am told, very grateful. . . . . I believe his visit will do much good. It will show him that we have no other wish than to see a strong Government in Afghanistan, where we have

no thought of interfering with him in any way. We want no resident at Cabul, or political influence in his kingdom." Here we see coming, link by link, more distinctly into view, that chain of evidence which connects the subsequent transactions of the Conference with Lord Mayo's knowledge of the promises and engagements which would be most valuable to the Ameer. We have seen him indicating how well he knew that British residents would be useful if they were acceptable to the Ruler and people of Cabul. We see him now indicating his perfect knowledge that those favourable conditions did not exist, and that one of the great advantages to be derived from the approaching Conference would be the opportunity it would afford the Viceroy of satisfying the Ameer that we did not want to press any residents upon him.

But further evidence is not wanting, even during the few days which yet remained before the Conference. In every letter I received which was written by Lord Mayo about this time, further links in the same chain of evidence are supplied. On the very day on which he left Calcutta, and, as he told me, just as he was about to step into the train, he addressed to me a letter, in which it might almost seem that he spoke as a prophet on the sad transactions of recent years. After assuring me of his entire agreement with the opinions I had expressed to him on the policy to be pursued towards Afghanistan, he proceeded thus :—"I see that there is to be a Central Asiatic debate in the House of Commons. I hope that sensible men will not advocate the extreme

lines of absolute inaction, and the worse alternative of meddling and interfering by subsidies and emissaries. The safe course lies in watchfulness, and friendly intercourse with neighbouring States and Tribes."

At last, in the early morning of the 27th of March, the Viceroy of India rode into Umballa, where the Ameer had already arrived two days before. Every pains had been taken to give to the meeting something more even than the usual pomp and state of an Indian Durbar. As an important part—or, at least, as an important indication—of the policy to be pursued, Lord Mayo endeavoured, in all matters of reception and ceremonial, to give the visit the character of a meeting between equals, and to show to the world that we looked on the Ameer as an independent, and not as a feudatory Prince. With this view former precedents were so far departed from as to show that an occurrence of a precisely similar kind never took place before in India. At first the old Sikh chiefs of the Punjaub, who detest an Afghan, were disposed to be jealous of these proceedings. But when it was explained to them that the Viceroy expected them to aid him in welcoming to their country a distinguished guest, they entered heartily into the position in which they were placed.

When the Conference began it was Lord Mayo's first object to find out what it was that the Ameer really expected and desired. After the dignified reserve which seldom deserts an Oriental had been somewhat overcome, the Viceroy found no difficulty in understanding the feelings of Shere Ali. He gave expression to them at

last with much vehemence. They were perfectly natural feelings; and looking at the facts from his point of view, it is impossible not to regard them with much sympathy. His fundamental grievance was the "one-sided" character of the Treaty of 1855. The terms of this Treaty have already been explained. They were extremely unequal as regards the obligations imposed on the two contracting parties. The Indian Government promised nothing except to respect the territories of Afghanistan, and never to interfere therein. But the corresponding obligation on the Ameer was very different. He promised to be "the friend of the friends, and the enemy of the enemies, of the Honorable East India Company." Thus, on the part of the Ameer, it was a Treaty of Alliance, offensive and defensive. On the part of the Indian Government it had no such character.

Accordingly, the moment Shere Ali opened his mouth at Umballa, this inequality was the burden of his song. He complained that our friendship with his father had been a "dry friendship," and "one-sided." We had not helped Shere Ali himself, as we ought to have done, to secure the throne. We had simply acknowledged him when, by his own good sword, he had secured it, or at least had very nearly secured it, for himself. We had equally recognised others when they had gained temporary success. What he now wanted was that we should guarantee, not himself only, but his lineal descendants on the throne which he had won. He could not be content with our system of recognising any *de facto* Ruler. But if the British Government would recognise himself and

his dynasty as the *de jure* Sovereigns of Afghanistan, then he would be our friend indeed. For this purpose, what he desired was, that we should accept the same obligation as that which the Treaty of 1855 had imposed upon his father. We must make with him a Treaty offensive and defensive. His enemies must be our enemies, and his friends must be our friends. He required, also, that we should give him a fixed subsidy, in the form of an annual payment.

Lord Mayo refused all these demands. He intimated to the Ameer that they were altogether inadmissible. They would have bound us to support the Ameer against internal insurrection, however much rebellion may have been justified by his own misgovernment. They would have bound us to support his own nomination of a successor, however unjust his selection might be, and however obnoxious to his people. But this result, which was most objectionable to us, was precisely what Shere Ali most desired. It was not against external attack that he was really anxious to secure from Lord Mayo a binding guarantee. He and his Minister fought his case with pertinacity, and always with one great end in view —a British guarantee for himself and for his family, as the rightful rulers of Afghanistan. Foreign aggression was hardly present to his mind at all. "It is most remarkable," said Lord Mayo in his private letter to me, giving an account of the Umballa Conference, "that during all the Ameer's conversations here, he has hardly ever mentioned the name of Russia. Whether it is that he is so wrapped up in his own affairs, or knows little

of their proceedings, he does not give them a thought, and when we have casually referred to them, he generally says that we shall not hear much of them in Afghanistan for a long time."

It is needless to say that the offensive and defensive Treaty which he desired would have been equally open to objection in its relation to foreign affairs. It would have placed the resources of India unreservedly and unconditionally at the disposal of Shere Ali. He would have been far more than the Foreign Minister for England in the politics of the frontier. In either point of view it was impossible to give him what he asked, and the only course left open to Lord Mayo was to offer him everything which it was safe to give.

Accordingly, in the letter which the Ameer finally accepted from Lord Mayo as the utmost in the direction of his wishes which could be conceded to him, the phraseology is such as to have little or no special reference to the case of external attack. "Although, as already intimated to you, the British Government does not desire to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, yet considering that the bonds of friendship between that Government and your Highness have lately been more closely drawn than heretofore, it will view with severe displeasure any attempt to disturb your position as Ruler of Cabul, and rekindle civil war; and it will further endeavour from time to time to strengthen the government of your Highness to enable you to exercise with equity and justice your rightful rule, and to transmit to

your descendants all the dignities and honours of which you are the lawful possessor."*

It will be seen that this sentence "sailed very near the wind." It caused some uneasiness at first to the Government at home lest it should have led the Ameer to suppose that he had actually got the guarantee which he desired. But Lord Mayo's ample explanations set this anxiety at rest, and I had the satisfaction of conveying to the Viceroy, in a despatch dated the 27th August, 1869,† the full approbation of her Majesty's Government of the course which, under very difficult circumstances, he had taken. Lord Mayo had carefully and repeatedly explained to the Ameer that "under no circumstances was he to expect that British troops would cross the frontier to put down civil war or domestic contention."

General assurances were given to Shere Ali that from time to time we should give him such assistance and support as the circumstances of the case might seem in our judgment to justify or require. As an earnest of our friendly intentions in this matter a considerable sum of money, and a further supply of arms, were given to him.

It may well be asked if this was enough to satisfy the Ameer as a substitute for all the demands he had made —for the treaty offensive and defensive, for the guarantee against domestic enemies, for the assurance of his succession, for the annual subsidy. No; there was one

* Ibid., No. 17, Inclos. 3, p. 90.
† Ibid., No. 20, p. 100.

more concession which Lord Mayo made, and made willingly—he promised to the Ameer "that no European officers should be placed as Residents in his cities."

It has been since contended on the evidence of Captain Grey, who acted as the Viceroy's interpreter at the Umballa Conference, that in the course of that Conference "the Ameer did freely consent to the appointment of European British officers in Balkh, Herat. or anywhere but actually in Cabul."* Even if there were no evidence against the accuracy of this impression on the mind of Captain Grey,—even if it were strictly and undeniably accurate,—it could have no bearing on the question of our obligations to the Ameer. That which alone is binding on the parties to such a Conference is the conclusion arrived at. It must happen in every negotiation that suggestions and proposals are made on both sides which are set aside in the course of the discussion. The utmost use that can be made of such suggestions, even when all the circumstances and conditions under which they are made are correctly recollected and reported, is to throw light on the processes of elimination by which the final results were reached. The fact of any particular suggestion having been made, coupled with the fact that it was not adopted, but, on the contrary, was thrown aside, can have no other effect than to prove that the rejection of it did not arise from accident, but from a deliberate decision.

So far, therefore, very little importance attaches to

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 12, p. 144.

Captain Grey's impression that at one moment during the Conferences, and probably on conditions which were never granted, the Ameer evinced a willingness to admit European officers as Residents in his dominions. It so happens, however, that there is the strongest, and, indeed, conclusive evidence, that Captain Grey must have misconstrued the language of the Ameer.

In the first place, it is not borne out by the only documents upon which he himself relies. These documents are (1) a Note submitted by himself to Lord Mayo, reporting certain conversations held on the 29th of March with Noor Mohammed, the confidential Minister of the Ameer, and (2) a relative passage in his own private memoranda. Now, on turning to the words of that Note, we find that the reported conversation had reference to the supposed case of Russian aggression against the Northern frontier of Afghanistan. The Minister is said to have expressed doubts of any Russian power of aggression for years to come, but still thought precautions should be taken. He is then reported to have said that he would construct forts on his own part or under British superintendence, and admit European garrisons, "if ever desired;" and further, that he "would be glad to see an Agent or Engineer Superintendent in Balkh, Herat, or anywhere but actually in Cabul." These words, even if reported with perfect accuracy not only in themselves, but in their connexion, do not at all justify the construction put upon them by Captain Grey. That the Ameer should have been willing to admit English garrisons into his

forts in the event of a Russian attack upon his frontiers, is probable enough, and all the more probable from the fact that Noor Mohammed evidently regarded such a danger as not a very near contingency. But this has nothing whatever to do with the proposal to station European officers as permanent Political Agents in his dominions. Neither have the succeeding words quoted from the Note, any reference to this proposal. He was willing to see "an Agent" or "Engineer Superintendent" in Balkh, or anywhere else except in Cabul. The Ameer never objected to British "Agents" anywhere, so long as they were not Europeans, and this passage of the Note does not specify the nationality of the Agent. But even if this passage did distinctly refer to an European, it probably referred to one who should be in charge of the fortifications previously referred to, and this connexion of ideas is still more plainly indicated by the alternative expression which is used, "or Engineer Superintendent."

As regards the second document relied upon by Captain Grey—viz., his own private memoranda, the passage he quotes is still more insufficient for the heavy superstructure he builds upon it. Indeed such evidence as it affords seems to me to point strongly the other way. The Ameer was asked to "accede to our deputation of Native Agents wherever we pleased"—a demand, on our part, plainly indicating how well we knew his objections to European Agents. The Ameer is then said to have been asked if he would be "agreeable to the deputation of an Envoy at some

future date." This question is obviously of the vaguest kind, and it was clearly impossible for the Ameer to say that never at any future time, or under any possible circumstances, could he receive an Envoy. But the reception of an Envoy does not necessarily mean the reception of a permanent resident Envoy. On the contrary, the wording of the question rather implies a special Embassy. "At some future date" is hardly the expression that would be used to describe the establishment of a permanent Mission. Yet even to this very vague question Captain Grey reports a very cautious answer:—"The Ameer expressed his willingness to receive an Envoy as soon as things had somewhat settled down, anywhere except at Cabul, where he thought it would affect his power with the people."

It appears, then, that even in the entire absence of any extraneous evidence against the assertion of Captain Grey, it is one which is not justified by the only documentary witness which he can summon in support of it.

But we have abundant other evidence in refutation of Captain Grey's interpretation of the facts. Mr. Seton Karr, who held the high office of Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, and who filled it ~~for many years~~ with acknowledged ability, was present during the whole of the Umballa Conferences, and has declared that neither the Ameer nor his Minister ever expressed any willingness to receive British officers as residents in his Kingdom. If this evidence stood alone it would be quite enough. On a question of such capital importance, which was the subject of Treaty stipulations of

subsisting force—a question, as I have shown, on which the mind of the Viceroy had been specially dwelling for several weeks up to the moment of the Conference—it is not possible that such a communication can have been made either by the Ameer or by his Minister without attracting the attention of the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.

But this is not all. On the 4th of April, before Lord Mayo had left Umballa, and when every minutest feature of the Conferences was still fresh in his recollection, he addressed to me a very long and very minute account of every important circumstance connected with his own communications to the Ameer, and of the Ameer's communications to him. In particular, he gave a detailed narrative of what passed at the Conference on the 29th of March—the very day to which Captain Grey's note refers. There is not a word in that account to indicate that the Ameer or his Minister made any such intimation as that to which Captain Grey refers. It was at this interview that the Ameer insisted not only with vehemence, but with great excitement, on the one object which he had most at heart, namely, that of an absolute dynastic guarantee from the British Government in favour of himself and his heirs of blood. To obtain this it is possible that he might have consented, or might have proposed to consent, to very hard terms. But the very hardest of those terms would have been the admission of resident British officers in his dominions. Lord Mayo was determined not to give him a dynastic guarantee, and he was equally determined not to press

upon him a demand which would have been in violation of a subsisting engagement, and which the Viceroy had apparently come to regard as likely to be really injurious, under existing circumstances, to the authority of the Ameer. It was in this spirit that he assured Shere Ali that whilst the British Government desired to support him, and had already done so in a most effective way, it did not desire that this support should be manifested in a form which might suggest the idea of his "being maintained mainly by extraneous aid." And so, having felt himself obliged by imperative considerations of public policy to decline giving to the Ameer that on which he had set his heart, the Viceroy wisely determined to give him every compensation in his power, and instead of pressing on him the acception of European officers, he promised him, on the contrary, that no such demand would be made at all.

The extreme jealousy of the Ameer and of his Minister on the subject of European Agents of the British Government was strongly shown at the Conferences which were held on the 1st and on the 3rd of April, of which notes were appended to Lord Mayo's letter to me of the 4th. One of the questions asked on the 1st was, "Would the Ameer sanction native Agents in Afghanistan, either as visitors or as permanent residents, supposing the British Government wished it?" Even on this question Noor Mohammed did not wish to commit himself, and showed the suspicion and the fear which was deeply rooted in the mind of every Afghan, by "asking, rather anxiously, whether European Agents were intended?" Before the

close of the day's proceedings the Foreign Secretary assured the Minister that he "had reserved nothing, and had nothing to reserve."

The Viceroy continued his correspondence with me on the subject of the Conferences for several weeks after he left Umballa. One of his letters, which was written on the 18th of April, is remarkable, as that which contained the summary of the results arrived at in the Umballa Conferences, which is quoted in the public Despatch dated July 1, 1869.* The summary arranges those results on the principle which was explained in the Preface to "The Eastern Question,"†—that, namely, of giving a separate list, first of the proposals which had been negatived, and next, of the proposals which had been affirmed. Among the proposals which had been negatived were those of sending into Afghanistan either troops, or officers, or Residents. Troops the Ameer might sometimes have liked to get—provided they were to be entirely at his own disposal. Officers also he might sometimes have desired to get—provided they were to be nothing more than his drill-sergeants, and to retire when he ceased to need them. "Residents," that is to say, officers resident in his country as Political Agents were, above all things, his dread and his abhorrence. But as he was not to have the things which he might have accepted as a boon, so neither was he to have thrust upon him a burden which he disliked. All those proposals, therefore, some for one reason, some for another reason, were equally negatived.

* Ibid., No. 19, p. 95, parag. 22. † See Appendix.

But this letter of the 18th of April is further remarkable as containing expressions of opinion which throw an important light on the reasons for Lord Mayo's silence with the Ameer regarding causes of anxiety which, nevertheless, he had full in view. In that letter he expressed it as his opinion (in which I did then and do now entirely agree) that our policy towards Afghanistan "ought to be the basis of our Central Asian policy." But one of the most essential parts of that policy, in the Viceroy's opinion, was not to feel and not to exhibit nervous anxiety and unreasonable fears. In his letter to me of the 4th of April Lord Mayo had, as we have seen, explained to me that the Ameer hardly ever mentioned Russia at all. Under these circumstances it was the Viceroy's wise policy not to exhibit ourselves in the light in which too many English and Indian politicians are never weary of exhibiting themselves to the world. They are perpetually assuring us that they do not dread the actual invasion of India by Russia, but that they do dread the disturbance and unsettlement of mind which the advances of that Power will occasion in the minds of the Indian Princes and people. But it is plain that this evil, whatever it may amount to, is aggravated by nothing so much as exhibitions of alarm on the part of the English Government. Lord Mayo was determined that no such apprehensions should be exhibited by himself. In this same letter he said upon this subject, "Sanguine politicians at home will be disappointed that what is termed the Central Asian question did not prominently appear at Umballa. I am sure you will agree

with me that it was a great blessing it did not. I certainly determined not to broach it, because I am of opinion that it is most desirable to show the Ameer that we have no apprehensions from the North. He, on the other hand, is so intent on establishing himself on the throne of Cabul, that he appears to think very little at present of either Russia or Persia."

The result was in one respect most important with respect to the whole scope and effect of the engagements made at Umballa. It dissociated those engagements entirely from the contingency of foreign aggression on Afghanistan. We have seen that Sir J. Lawrence, when Shere Ali was reported to be acting in alliance with Persia, at once intimated to the Government at home that his policy of abstention would not apply to such a case. In like manner Lord Mayo pointed out to me that, "as the question of the invasion by a foreign European Power of his territory was never alluded to by the Ameer or by me, our course of action in the event of such an occurrence taking place is not affected by anything that took place at Umballa."

I now come to one of the most important of this series of letters, dated June 3rd, 1869. It was written by the Viceroy expressly to explain various misapprehensions which he found had arisen respecting what he had said and done at the Umballa Conferences, and was, indeed, intended to anticipate, among others, those misconceptions which led to my Despatch of the 14th of May.*

---

* Ibid., No. 18, p. 91.

In fact this Despatch and Lord Mayo's letter of June 3rd crossed each other. In this letter he says emphatically, "The only pledges (to the Ameer) given were: that we would not interfere in his affairs; that we would support his independence; that we would not force European officers or Residents upon him against his wish." There is no ambiguity here. We have here Lord Mayo's distinct declaration that at Umballa he did renew and repeat that "pledge" to the Ameer which had been embodied in the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857 with his father. It was a pledge which he and his family had always valued almost above all others, and the fulfilment of which was doubly due to him now when Lord Mayo had felt himself compelled to refuse so much that he had eagerly desired. This letter of June 3rd places beyond all doubt Lord Mayo's estimate of the binding character of those promises which he had given to the Ameer, and of the rank and place among those promises which had been assigned to the engagement on the subject of the residence of European officers in Cabul.

And now having concluded my account of the Umballa Conferences, taken from the most authentic of all sources, I must express my opinion, as the Secretary of State under whom the sanction and approval of the Crown was given to Lord Mayo's conduct, as to the binding character of the promises which were given by that Viceroy. Sir James Stephen, in a letter lately communicated to the *Times*, has put forward the doctrine that in our relations with semi-barbarous States like that of Afghanistan, we are not bound by the somewhat technical and

elaborate code of rules which go by the name of International Law, and which are recognised as binding between the more civilised nations of the world. In this general proposition I agree. I have too sincere a respect for the high character as well as for the great abilities of Sir James Stephen to suppose that in laying down this proposition he intended to defend, or even to palliate any departure from the strictest good faith with such nations where engagements, direct or indirect, have been made with them. I am sure he cannot have intended to "use this liberty as a cloak of licentiousness." The truth is, Sir James Stephen's doctrine—in the only sense in which I agree in it, and in the only sense in which, as I believe, he ever can have intended to propound it—is a doctrine which leaves us free to apply to all engagements with half-civilised Governments, even a higher standard of honour than is usually applied to international dealings between equal States. For example, there are technical distinctions, well known and recognised among them, which establish different degrees of obligation as attaching to different forms of diplomatic documents. It would be dishonourable, in my opinion, and dishonourable in the highest degree, to take advantage of any such distinctions, in cases where they cannot be equally known and equally recognised by both parties. If the pledged word of a Viceroy of India is not to be held as good and as binding as any Treaty, there is an end of our claim to confidence in the East. We ought not to tolerate the smallest trifling with this absolute demand upon us. We have only to look at the 54th

paragraph of Lord Mayo's public despatch on the Umballa Conference,* to see what a high place must be given in the Court of Honour to the pledges which he gave to the Ameer. He says, he thought it undesirable to engage in voluminous written communications with the Ameer, because "the visit was one of a personal character, conceived in the spirit of amity and good faith."

The pledges given at the Umballa Conference are all the more binding on us from the effect which they actually produced. Except these pledges, there was nothing to account for the good humour with which Shere Ali returned to his Kingdom from his conference with the Viceroy. Beyond the repetition of some immediate assistance in money and in arms, and beyond the promise not to embarrass him with the presence of European Agents, we had given him nothing that he desired to have. Behind these promises, indeed, there remained the personal influence of Lord Mayo. His manly presence, his genial open-hearted countenance, and his transparent sincerity of character—these had produced a great effect, even on an angry and suspicious Asiatic.

It would, however, be a very great mistake to suppose that the Ameer was ever really satisfied; or that, if he was so for a moment, his discontent did not soon return. The unhappy relations which he speedily established with the ablest and most powerful of his sons, and the usual influence of the harem which induced him to desire

* Ibid., No. 18, p. 98.

the succession of a later child—these things kept constantly before him the dangers of intestine strife, and the prospect of a disputed throne. An Afghan does not readily abandon any purpose, and the steady refusal of the British Government to pledge itself to one party or another in the family feuds of Afghanistan, while every day that refusal became more and more clearly necessary as well as just, became also more and more a practical grievance to the Ameer.

Shere Ali had brought with him to Umballa the boy Abdoolah Jan, and this young prince had, at all the Durbars, sat on the left hand of the Ameer, whilst the Viceroy sat upon the right.* This position seemed to point to the acknowledgment, by the Ameer at least, of Abdoolah Jan as his heir-apparent. But no nomination of his successor had as yet been formally announced by the Ameer. It is now evident that this was the very matter which made Shere Ali so bent on obtaining a dynastic guarantee, and it is probable that if this guarantee had been given, Abdoolah would have been at once proclaimed the successor of the Ameer. In this event, and in the event of the death of Shere Ali, the British Government would have been committed to the support of Abdoolah in the civil war, which would have been immediately raised by Yakoob Khan. But failing in his demand for a dynastic guarantee, Shere Ali seems to have hesitated to avow his intentions. During one of the Conferences at Umballa, Lord Mayo did make

* Ibid., No. 17, Inclos. 2, p. 90.

inquiries of the Ameer upon the subject, and intimated that it was a question on which the British Government could not but feel a friendly interest. The Ameer, however, parried the inquiry, and said that his determination in that matter when it was come to, would be communicated from Cabul.

The progress of events soon showed the danger attaching to such guarantees as that which Shere Ali had desired. In 1870, Yakoob Khan raised the standard of rebellion; and in June, 1871, had made himself master of Herat. In the same month Lord Mayo heard that Yakoob had made advances to his father for a reconciliation, and he determined to take the very delicate step of writing to the Ameer, advising him to come to terms with his son. This accordingly he did. The letter of the Viceroy reached our native Agent at Cabul on the 16th of June, and was immediately communicated to the Ameer. The advice of Lord Mayo probably corresponded at that moment with the Ameer's own estimate of the wisest policy to be pursued towards his powerful and successful son. He therefore immediately addressed a letter to Yakoob Khan in the sense of Lord Mayo's advice, and assured Yakoob that if he came to express repentance, and make his submission at Cabul, he would be forgiven and received. The result was that Yakoob came to Cabul, and that his father deemed it expedient to send him back to Herat, with the appointment of Governor of that important City and Province. This result gave much satisfaction to the Viceroy, and it was indeed a very remarkable proof of the influence which he

had acquired over the mind of Shere Ali by the pursuance of a perfectly open and friendly policy.

It is, however, a signal illustration of Lord Mayo's excellent judgment and good sense that the success, or apparent success, of this friendly intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan did not for a moment shake his former views as to the serious danger and impolicy of anything approaching to formal engagements with the Ameer in relation to such affairs. On the contrary, the whole transaction confirmed him in those views, because they brought out in a vivid light the essential instability of Shere Ali's throne, and the still greater instability of any predetermined order of succession. Accordingly, on the 7th of July, before Lord Mayo had, as yet, heard of the final result, but when he knew that his letter had been successful, and that Yakoob was then on his way to Cabul, he addressed to me a letter in which he reiterated, in the strongest language, his confidence in the policy which had been pursued by Sir J. Lawrence and himself, in opposition to the policy which recommended more active interference. "It is impossible," he said, "to express in too strong terms how entirely I disapprove of the policy of interfering in the family quarrels of the Barukzyes." He proceeds to illustrate this opinion by illustrations in detail, which it is unnecessary to quote, because they contain allusions and references to persons which are among the very few passages of a really private character which occur in our correspondence on the subject. Suffice it to say that Lord Mayo indicated his opinion that Yakoob Khan would

probably be the future Ruler of Cabul, and that it would be most unfortunate if we were ever again to be in the position of maintaining on the throne of Cabul a "hated Sovereign."

Meanwhile, however, the immediate effects of the Umballa Conference were such as to keep Shere Ali in good humour. The measure of assistance which had been given to the Ameer, first by Sir J. Lawrence and then by Lord Mayo, both in the moral effect produced by the support of the British Government, and by the actual funds put at his disposal, had enabled Shere Ali to establish his authority over the whole of Afghanistan, and of the country called Afghan Turkestan, lying between the Hindoo Koosh and the Oxus. So soon after the Umballa Conference as the 1st of May, 1869, Colonel Pollock, the Commissioner of Peshawur, had reported as the direct and immediate result of the Umballa meeting, that the Ameer had been able to recover Balkh without a struggle, and had secured the submission of Badakshan.

Whilst the opinions and policy of the Government on the Central Asian question were thus being carried into execution in India, through the Viceroy, with a dignity of conduct and a steadiness of judgment which left us nothing to desire, the same opinions and the same policy were being prosecuted at home through the Foreign Office. During the same weeks in which Lord Mayo was preparing to receive Shere Ali at Umballa, Lord Clarendon was in communication with the Russian Ambassador in London, intimating the desire of the Cabinet

to arrive at some understanding with the Government of Russia on the questions which might be raised by the rapid advances of the Russian Empire in Central Asia. In these communications with Baron Brünow, Lord Clarendon explained that the main object of such an understanding was to pacify the public mind both in England and in Asia. So far as the Government was concerned, we felt that "we were strong enough in India to repel all aggression." We made no complaint, and we repudiated any feeling of alarm. On the other hand, we expressed no such implicit confidence as had been expressed by Sir Stafford Northcote. On the contrary, we pointed out that the progress of Russia in Central Asia was, like our own progress in Hindostan, the effect of tendencies and of causes which were more or less in constant operation, and that certain results would naturally and almost necessarily follow from them which it would be wise on the part of both Governments to foresee and to prevent. In indicating what those results were, we did not pretend to any right or to any desire of stopping Russia in her career of conquest over the desert wastes and the robber tribes of Central Asia. We did not hint that a large portion of the world was to be kept in a state of hopeless barbarism, to save us from having nervous fears. We specified and limited the demands which we thought we had a fair right to make,—and these were that measures should be taken to prevent any aspiring Russian general from intriguing with malcontent Indian Princes, or disturbing the States and populations which touch our frontiers. For this purpose, moreover,

a definite arrangement was suggested, and that was, that "some territory should be recognised as neutral between the possessions of England and of Russia in the East, which should be the limit of those possessions, and should be scrupulously respected by both Powers." Baron Brünow concurred with Lord Clarendon in the suggestion. He made a report of it to his Government, and on the very day on which Lord Mayo was receiving Shere Ali at Umballa he brought to the Foreign Office a letter from Prince Gortchakow, specifying Afghanistan as a territory and a State well fitted to occupy the position which was indicated in Lord Clarendon's suggestion. He was therefore authorised to give a "positive assurance that Afghanistan would be considered as entirely beyond the sphere in which Russia might be called upon to exercise her influence."*

It is of great importance to look closely at the language of the letter from Prince Gortchakow to Baron Brünow, dated on the 7th and which Lord Clarendon received on the 27th of March. That language was quite distinct that the object in view was to be that of keeping "a zone between the possessions of the two Empires in Asia, to preserve them from any contact." It is clear, therefore, that whatever territory might be fixed upon by the two Governments as constituting this zone, it was contemplated that the actual possessions of Russia and of England might come to touch it on opposite sides. But Russia was as yet very far from actually touching any

* Central Asia, II., 1873, No. 1, p. 1.

part of the Afghan frontier. Bokhara touched it, if Afghanistan was fully understood to extend to the Oxus. And Bokhara was now under the command of Russia. But if Afghanistan were not understood as extending to the Oxus on its northern frontier, then the acceptance of that country and Kingdom as constituting the proposed zone would leave room for a large advance on the part of Russia, to the south of her then acknowledged frontier, and might thus possibly be held to sanction her absorption of the whole territory between Bokhara and the Hindoo Koosh. Lord Clarendon, therefore, with very proper caution, in thanking the Russian Government for the spirit of their communication, and in expressing general agreement in the principle of the proposal, reserved his acceptance of Afghanistan as the territory to be selected, upon the ground that "he was not sufficiently informed on the subject to express an opinion as to whether Afghanistan should fulfil the conditions of circumstances of a neutral territory between the two Powers, such as it seemed desirable to establish."*

It was of course at this time my duty to inform Lord Clarendon upon those political and geographical facts which were of importance to the question then under discussion, and which were only known, or best known, to the Government of India and its officers. I was at that very time receiving communications from Lord Mayo which, as I have already explained, represented Russian officials as holding very suspicious language on

* Ibid., No. 1, Inclos., p. 3.

the subject of the limits of the Afghan Kingdom.* These reports might not be correct. But, on the other hand, they might be true; and at all events, they suggested caution and inspired serious doubt whether it would be safe to accept Afghanistan as fulfilling the required conditions, unless it were clearly understood by both Governments what were the territories included under that name. Accordingly, after hearing all that could be ascertained from our Indian experts as to the somewhat obscure geography of the northern frontier of Shere Ali's dominions, I came to the conclusion that it would be unsafe and inexpedient to accept Afghanistan as the farthest limit of Russian advances, unless it were at the same time admitted as a fact that Afghanistan extended to the Upper Oxus. It appeared to us farther that it would be best to take that great river as the boundary of the "zone" for some distance even beyond the point where it ceased to touch the Afghan dominions. The effect of this would have been to include in the territory which was to be intermediate between the possessions of England and of Russia, not only the whole of Shere Ali's dominions, but also a large tract of country, for the most part desert, which was laid down in the maps as belonging to the Khan of Khiva.

Accordingly, these proposals were communicated to Baron Brünow by Lord Clarendon on the 17th of April 1869, and it was specially explained that they were founded on "the decided opinion of the Secretary of State

* See ante, p. 37.

for India," after consultation with those members of Council who were best acquainted with the country.*

This proposal at once compelled the Government of Russia to show its cards: and on the 2nd of June Prince Gortchakow avowed that very opinion of which the Indian Government had been suspicious, namely, that Afghanistan did not reach the Oxus, and that, on the contrary, the territory of Bokhara extended to the south of that river.†

In the discussions which followed, the last of our two proposals came to be abandoned. That proposal, namely, the extension of the proposed "zone" beyond the Afghan Kingdom to some point farther westward upon the Oxus as yet undefined, was a proposal which was completely overshadowed by the paramount importance of a clear and definite understanding as to the extent of territory which was included in Afghanistan. The discussions on this subject were protracted during the long period of three years and a half. The discussion was conducted in a most friendly spirit, generally of course through the Foreign Office, but at one time also, in a subordinate degree, through an officer of the Indian Government, Mr. Douglas Forsyth. He visited St. Petersburg in October, 1869, furnished with instructions and private letters from Lord Mayo, in which full explanations were given to the Russian Cabinet as to the views and intentions of the Government of India. The result of these communications was an entire agreement

* Central Asia, II., 1873, No. 3, p. 4. † Ibid., No. 7, p. 6.

on three important principles: 1st, that the territory in the actual possession, at the present moment, of Shere Ali Khan should be considered to constitute the limits of Afghanistan; 2nd, that beyond those limits the Ameer should make no attempt to exercise any influence or interference, and that the English Government should do all in their power to restrain him from any attempts at aggression; 3rd, that, for their part, the Imperial Government should use all their influence to prevent any attack by the Emir of Bokhara upon Afghan territory.

These general principles were for the moment quite sufficient to have a most useful practical result, in enabling the Indian Government to give assurances to Shere Ali, and to give him advice also which tended to keep the peace, and to prevent any practical questions being raised. They were sufficient also to determine Russia in similar conduct in her relations with Bokhara, and in her relations also with fugitive members of Shere Ali's family who were pretenders to his throne. In all these matters both Russia and England acted with good faith on the spirit of the Agreement, during the whole of the three years and a half occupied by the discussion. But so long as there was no clear and definite understanding with Russia as to what she meant by "the territories in the actual possession of Shere Ali," and so long especially as she avowed that she did not admit Badakshan and Wakhan to be a part of those territories, the Agreement had no permanent value. Accordingly, after the return of Mr. Forsyth to India, and after Lord Mayo and his Council had obtained the fullest information, both his-

torical and geographical, on the northern extension of the Afghan Kingdom, they embodied their information in a despatch to me, dated May 20, 1870. It gave a precise definition to the northern and north-western frontiers of Afghanistan, emphatically asserted that they extended to the Upper Oxus, and indicated the point on the westward course of that river where they marched with provinces belonging to Bokhara.*

The Russian Government contested this definition of Afghanistan with some keenness, and especially insisted on representing Badakshan and Wakhan as dependencies of Bokhara. So late as December, 1872,† Prince Gortchakow maintained this view with extraordinary pertinacity, and offered a compromise on the western portion of Lord Mayo's boundary, which would have expressly abandoned the claim of Shere Ali to the disputed province of Badakshan. At last the Emperor of Russia personally intervened, and sent Count Schouvalow on a mission to London, for the purpose of conceding the contention of the British Government that the Upper Oxus should be admitted as the northern frontier of Afghanistan. His Majesty said that "there might be arguments used respectively by the departments of each Government; but he was of opinion that such a question should not be a cause of difference between the two countries, and he was determined that it should not be so."‡ On the 24th of January, 1873, this admission of the Emperor was

* Ibid., No. 60, Inclos., p. 45-7.
† Correspondence with Russia, 1873, No. 2, p. 4.
‡ Ibid., No. 3, p. 12.

suitably acknowledged by Lord Granville,* and the discussion terminated.†

I know it will be asked by scoffers what was the worth of this understanding when it had been laboriously attained? what was the worth of these assurances when they had been mutually exchanged? My answer is a very short one. They were of no value at all when the foreign policy of England came to be directed in the spirit of those by whom this question is asked. Neither international Agreements of this kind, nor even formal Treaties, are worth anything in the event of war, or in the event of avowed preparations for war. Governments are not obliged to wait till the first actual blow has been struck by another Government, using, in the meantime, the language of insult and of menace. When the Prime Minister, speaking at Russia, boasted after a Guildhall dinner, that England could stand more than one, or even two, or even three campaigns; when the Home Secretary, speaking of Russia, told the House of Commons with mimetic gestures, that she was "creeping, creeping, creeping," where that Minister had known for months that Russia had openly declared she would go if she were required to do so; when the Cabinet as a whole had summoned the Reserves at home, and had ordered

* Ibid., No. 4, p. 13.

† It has been represented by Sir Henry Rawlinson that the admission by the Emperor of Russia of our contention respecting the limits of Afghanistan was conceded in order to secure our acquiescence in the Khivan Expedition. I see no proof of this. No British Government in its senses would have gone to war with Russia to prevent that Expedition.

troops from India to enable them to act in the spirit of these harangues—then, indeed, peaceful understandings and Agreements became of no avail.

But if it is asked by reasonable men, and in a reasonable spirit, what the actual force and value of the understanding with Russia was, during the years when it was unaffected by passionate suspicions, and by undignified threats, then the question deserves a much more careful examination than has yet been given to it.

In the first place, then, it was not an Agreement which was understood by either party as prohibiting Russia from having any communication whatever with the Ameer of Cabul. This has been pretended or assumed, but it is not true. In the despatch of Prince Gortchakow, dated the 7th of March, 1869,* which is one of the most authoritative documents in the case, the promise of Russia to abstain from the exercise of any influence in Afghanistan was given, indeed, in positive terms. But it was given also with an explanatory addition, which makes it quite clear wherein the whole force and meaning of that promise was understood to lie. What the Emperor disclaimed and abjured as "entering into his intentions" was, any "intervention or interference whatever opposed to the independence of that State." Communications of courtesy, or even communications having for their sole aim the promotion of commercial intercourse, were certainly not excluded by this engagement.

That this was the clear understanding of both parties

* Central Asia, II., 1873, Inclos. p. 3.

before the passionate jealousy of our Ministers was roused by their own policy in the Turkish question, is proved by the whole course of events up to the appearance of that question above the political horizon. In June, 1870, after the Agreement had been fully established between the two Governments, Prince Gortchakow himself* communicated to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg a letter which General Kaufmann had addressed to Shere Ali on the very important and delicate subject of the asylum given at Tashkend to the fugitive Abdul Rahman Khan, one of the aspirants to the throne of Cabul. This letter is a very full one, entering freely and frankly into an explanation of the political relations between Russia and Cabul, as well as of the relations between both and the Khanate of Bokhara. It addressed the Ameer as "under the protection of the Indian Government," intimated that with that Government Russia was in friendly relations, warned him gently against interfering with Bokhara, as being under the protection of the Czar.† No hint was dropped by the British Ambassador that this direct communication from the Russian Governor-General to the Ameer of Cabul was considered as involving any departure whatever from the spirit or from the letter of the understanding between the two Governments. Within six days of the same date this very same letter came under the special notice of Lord Mayo, to whom it was referred by the Ameer as having somewhat puzzled and alarmed him. Lord Mayo took the trouble of writing an elaborate letter to Shere Ali,

* Ibid., No. 58, p. 43. † Ibid., No. 58, Inclos., p. 44.

explaining the true meaning of General Kaufmann's letter, and expressing the highest satisfaction with it.* In December, 1873, the Government of India were acquainted with the fact that a letter of similar purport had been addressed to the Ameer in August of that year, informing him of the Russian conquest of Khiva.† No adverse notice was taken of this fact by the Government of India, or by the Government at home. These facts, then very recent, were in possession of the present Government when they succeeded to office. But as neither Lord Mayo, nor Lord Northbrook, nor Lord Granville had remonstrated with Russia on the subject of these letters, so neither did Lord Derby nor Lord Salisbury. It is remarkable that the first of these letters from General Kaufmann which was transmitted to Lord Salisbury was one dated the 25th of February, 1874, acknowledging the nomination by the Ameer of Abdoollah Jan as his heir-apparent, and congratulating him on this selection.‡ Not one word of remonstrance was uttered—not one word of suspicion breathed. In May of the same year Lord Northbrook drew Lord Salisbury's attention—not to the mere fact that Shere Ali had received another letter from the Russian officer then in command at Tashkend,—but to the fact that in this letter allusion was made to some unknown request which the Ameer had made.§ Still I find no record of any warning to Russia that her officers were violating the Agreement with England. In the Autumn of 1875

* Central Asia, I., 1878, p. 184. † Ibid., No. 5, Inclos. 2, p. 8.
‡ Ibid., No. 13, Inclos. 2, p. 15. § Ibid., No. 15, Inclos. 1, p. 16.

matters went still farther; not only was another letter sent from the Russian Governor-General of Russian Turkestan, but it was sent by a messenger who is called an "Envoy." It was a letter informing the Ameer of the return to Tashkend of General Kaufmann after his absence for half a year at St. Petersburg. But it contained a sentence which caught the ever-wakeful attention of the Cabul authorities. Kaufmann spoke of the alliance between England and Russia as an "omen for those countries which, under the protection of the Emperor of Russia and the Queen of England, live in great peace and comfort."* The Afghan politicians seem to have put the somewhat overstrained interpretation upon this sentence that the Russian Government had made itself partner in the protection of Afghanistan. They said "this paragraph is in a new tone. God knows what State secrets are concealed in it." Still no alarm was taken. This news from the Cabul Diaries was forwarded to the Foreign Office without note or comment from the Indian Secretary. The reply of the Ameer was forwarded in similar silence on the 6th of January, 1876.† On the 25th of August the same ceremony was repeated,‡ and this time a very long letter from General Kaufmann to the Ameer was enclosed to the Foreign Office by Lord Lytton's Government, but still without any indications, even of uneasiness, on the subject. The letter gave a detailed narrative of the transaction which had led to the Russian conquest of Kokhand.§

* Ibid., No. 58, Inclos. 6, p. 65. † Ibid., No. 60, p. 66.
‡ Ibid., No. 69, p. 75. § Ibid., Inclos. 6, p. 77.

It is established therefore by a long series of transactions, extending over several years, and passing under the view of successive Ambassadors, Viceroys, and Secretaries of State, that the Agreement with Russia was not understood by either Power to preclude direct communications of courtesy passing between Russian officials and the Ameer of Cabul.

At last, on the 16th of September, 1876, but not sooner, the new Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton, telegraphed to Lord Salisbury that he had sent off a despatch expressing a decided opinion that her Majesty's Government ought to remonstrate with Russia on Kaufmann's repeated correspondence with the Ameer by hand of Russian agents, two of whom were reported to be then in Cabul. Lord Lytton added words which imply that the Government of India had before entertained objections to this intercourse, but "had not hitherto asked her Majesty's Government to formally remonstrate on this open breach of repeated pledges."* This assertion is unsupported by any evidence so far as regards the Government of India under previous Viceroys, and as Lord Lytton had then occupied that position for only five months, the self-restraint of the Government of India under the Russian provocation cannot have been of long endurance.

On the 22nd of September, 1876, Lord Salisbury forwarded this telegram to the Foreign Office, with the wholly new and very important information that he

* Ibid., No. 71, Inclos. pp. 79, 80.

"concurred in the views expressed by the Viceroy, and was of opinion that, as suggested by his Excellency, a remonstrance against General Kaufmann's proceedings should be addressed to the Russian Government without delay."*

It is remarkable that the Foreign Secretary, in complying with the request of his colleague, the Secretary of State for India, indicated a consciousness that Kaufmann's letters were not a breach of the Russian Engagement, and did not constitute a legitimate ground of diplomatic remonstrance. He took care to found his remonstrance not upon the letters, but upon "reports from other sources that the instructions of the Asiatic agent (who took the letter to Cabul) were to induce Shere Ali to sign an offensive and defensive alliance with the Russian Government, as well as a Commercial Treaty." This, of course, is an entirely different ground of complaint—and a legitimate one, if there had been the smallest evidence of its truth. But Lord Derby, without committing himself to belief in this report, confined himself strictly to it as the only ground on which remonstrance was to be made by our Ambassador. Lord Augustus Loftus was not ordered to ask from the Russian Government a promise that Kaufmann should write no more letters. He was only ordered to ask "a written disclaimer of any intention on their part to negotiate treaties with Shere Ali without the consent of her Majesty's Government."†

---

* Ibid., No. 71, p. 79. † Ibid., No 72, p. 80.

It is impossible not to ask when and how this new light came to flash on the Government of India and on the Indian Secretary of State. A little attention to dates, and to the character of contemporary events, may perhaps help to explain the mystery.

It was in December, 1875, that the Cabinet of London had become aware that Russia was moving in concert with Austria-Hungary and with Germany for some intervention on behalf of the Christian subjects of the Porte.* On the 30th of that month the Andrassy Note had been signed at Buda-Pesth. This union of the "Three Emperors" had excited the jealousy and the fear of the Turkish party in England; and we have seen that on the 25th of January, 1876, the Cabinet of London had felt itself compelled, but with extreme and avowed reluctance, to give its adhesion to that celebrated Instrument. During the months of February, March, and April, 1876, further negotiations were being carried on between the same dreadful "Three" to secure the peace of Europe, by putting some effectual pressure on the Turks for the reform of their administration. During the month of April especially, the influence and the power of Russia in these negotiations was becoming more and more apparent, and were leading to some real concert among the Powers of Europe in spite of the dilatory and evasive policy of the Cabinet of London. They did at last produce in May the Berlin Memorandum, which, as a means of arriving at peace, was destroyed by the Queen's Govern-

* See "The Eastern Question," Vol. I. Ch. iv., p. 159.

ment, but which as a means of fortifying Russia in the alternative of war, was immensely strengthened by the solitary resistance of the English Government.

It was in the midst of these transactions that the new Viceroy of India was appointed, and was charged with personal and with written instructions which will be examined presently. Before the 16th of September, the day on which Lord Lytton sent off his excited telegram about Kaufmann's letters, the European embroglio had become very thick indeed. Russia by her firm yet moderate attitude and language,—the public feeling of the British people and their just indignation against the Turks,—were compelling the Government to bow beneath the storm, and to threaten Turkey with complete abandonment in the event of Russia declaring war. But the keener spirits in the Cabinet were restive and fretful under this position of affairs. On the 20th of September, Mr. Disraeli had made his celebrated speech at Aylesbury,* and we can therefore understand without much difficulty the feelings under which, two days later, Lord Salisbury declared, for the first time, and in the face of his own previous acquiescence,—that Kaufmann's letters to the Ameer were a breach of the Engagement between England and Russia in respect to their relations with Afghanistan.

Before proceeding, however, to trace the career of the new Viceroy of India in the Imperial policy which he went out to prosecute, I must return for a moment to the

* Ibid., Vol. I. Ch. vi., p. 270.

Agreement with Russia, for the purpose of pointing out one other condition of things, and one other course of conduct, which was almost as effectual as warlike threats in depriving it of all force and value. The course of conduct I refer to is that of dealing with the advances of Russia in Central Asia after the Agreement had been made, precisely in the same way in which we might have been entitled, or at least disposed, to deal with them, if no such Agreement had been come to. The whole object and purpose of the Agreement was to establish a boundary line beyond which we need not be in a constant fuss about Russian aggression. If there was any sense or meaning in an understanding that Afghanistan was not to be encroached upon, even by the influence of Russia, that meaning was that Russian advances which did not come near that Kingdom should cease to be the object of our jealousy and resentment. Even before that Agreement was made I never could see that, internationally, we had any more right to remonstrate with Russia on her advances in Central Asia, than she would have had to remonstrate with us on our advances in Hindostan. Of course nations may make anything they choose a ground of quarrel and of war. But it is in the highest degree undignified on the part of any Government to be perpetually remonstrating with another upon acts which it is not prepared to resist, and which it is not in a position to prevent. For this reason, even before the Agreement with Russia was made, I have always regarded with a feeling akin to mortification the language of those who in the press, or in Parliament, or in diplomacy, have

been continually declaiming against the natural and inevitable advances of Russia in Central Asia. But since the Agreement with Russia was concluded, acknowledging Afghanistan as under our predominant influence, and as excluded from the influence of Russia, it has always appeared to me that the continuance of this language is tainted, in addition, with something very like a breach of faith. It is not only undignified, but it is unfair, to accept that Agreement as binding Russia not to advance, either by actual conquest or by establishing influence, beyond a certain line, and at the same time as leaving us as free as ever to denounce her operations when conducted far within that line. Outside of Afghanistan, Russia unquestionably kept her freedom. We, of course, kept our freedom also. But there is no truth in representing any Russian movement beyond Afghanistan as a breach of the Agreement of 1873. Yet this has been the actual conduct, I will not say of the English people, but of too many who assume to speak on their behalf. It has appeared even in the official language of Ambassadors and of Secretaries of State, and it has led public writers of high authority with their countrymen, to make accusations against Russia which on the face of them are unjust, and which have had a powerful effect in stimulating national animosities, and inspiring unmanly fears.

Of this a signal example is to be found in the language we have held upon the subject of Khiva. It is generally asserted, and widely believed, that in the conquest of Khiva, Russia has been guilty towards us of flagrant

breaches of engagement. The papers presented to Parliament disprove this accusation altogether. They do more than this: they convict those who make these accusations of that kind of reckless misquotation, which, although often the effect of mere passion, approaches very nearly to the bad faith which they charge against Russia. We have habitually treated certain intimations made to us by Russia of her intentions, and certain declarations of her policy, as if those intimations and declarations were in the nature of binding promises and of international engagements. But the intimation of an intention is not necessarily a promise. A declaration, or an assurance as to policy is not necessarily an engagement. It is not so in private life, and it is still less so in the intercourse of nations. There may, of course, be circumstances which give a higher value to the intimation of an intention than would otherwise attach to it. If it is made, for example, as part of a negotiation, and in connexion with benefits received on account of it; or, again, if it is made by a powerful nation to a weak one as an assurance on which it may rely,—then, indeed, such an intimation may assume the character of a promise. But this character entirely depends on the context not merely of words, but of circumstances and events. The mere intimation of an intention by one Government to another does not in itself amount to, or even imply, an engagement. This would be true, even if the intimations of intention, or the declarations of policy on which we rely, had been made without express reservations and explanations limiting their effect. But the intimations of

intention, and the declarations and assurances as to policy which have been made to us by Russia, on the subject of her relations with the States of Central Asia, have been almost uniformly made under express and emphatic reservations which it is customary with us to suppress or to ignore. In the Circular Despatch to the Russian Ambassadors at the various Courts of Europe which was issued by Prince Gortchakow in November, 1864, the Cabinet of St. Petersburg set forth, for the information of the world, the principles which would guide her policy in Central Asia. In this State Paper not only was everything like a promise avoided, but declarations were made obviously inconsistent with the possibility of any such promise being given. Russia likened her own position in Central Asia to the position of the British Government in India, and pointed out that annexations had been, and might still be, the necessary results of contact with semi-barbarous States. It is true that she expressed her desire to avoid this result if it were possible to do so. But she expressed also her determination to establish free commercial routes, and to punish tribes who lived on plunder. This in itself was tantamount to a declaration of war against all the Khanates of Central Asia. Russia did not conceal the import and the possible consequences of her determination in the matter. It demanded, as the Circular very truly said, "a complete transformation of the habits of the people." But no such transformation could be effected without "teaching the populations in Asia that they will gain more in favouring and protecting the caravan trade than in robbing it."

Nor was the Circular silent on the methods of operation which were contemplated for the purpose of teaching this lesson. "It is a peculiarity of Asiatics," it said, "to respect nothing but visible and palpable force." "If, the robbers once punished, the expedition is withdrawn, the lesson is soon forgotten: its withdrawal is put down to weakness." Finally, with a downrightness of expression which leaves nothing to be misunderstood, the Circular declared in its concluding sentence that "the Imperial Cabinet, in assuming this task, takes as its guide the interests of Russia."*

Such is the nature of the Manifesto which, it is pretended, held out a promise to Europe that Russian annexations and conquests in Central Asia were to cease for ever. It would be much nearer the truth to say, on the contrary, that it was a Manifesto rendering it certain that those conquests could not and would not be restrained. Yet public writers of the highest authority never speak of this document without that kind of misrepresentation which is the natural result of strong antipathies or of overmastering hobbies. Among these writers no one is more justly distinguished than Sir Henry Rawlinson. With unequalled knowledge of those regions, and with great powers of statement, he never loses an opportunity of insisting on the danger arising to us out of the advances of Russia in Central Asia. Yet whilst treating the subject much more ably than most other writers, and whilst trying to state fairly the physical and military

* Central Asia, No. II., 1873, pp. 72–5.

necessities to which these advances are often due, he never refers to this Russian Manifesto without unconsciously misquoting it, and misinterpreting it. Thus in the Memorandum of 1869, he speaks of it as "asserting with categorical precision that the expansion of the Empire had now reached its limit." I look in vain in the Manifesto for any such declaration, or for anything which is at all equivalent. It is true, indeed, that the Manifesto speaks of a military line which had then been established between Lake Issyk-Kaul and the Syr-Daria River (Jaxartes), as a line which had the advantage of "fixing for us with geographical precision the limit up to which we are bound to advance and at which we must halt." But the very next words demonstrate that the "must" in this sentence referred entirely to physical and political difficulties which the Russian Government were unwilling to encounter, but which they did by no means promise never to encounter, if by circumstances they should be led or forced to do so. On the contrary, the whole tone and the whole argument of the Manifesto is directed to reserve to the Russian Government perfect freedom for the future in her dealings with the States of Central Asia, and to emphasise with the greatest care the conditions which rendered it absolutely necessary that this freedom should be maintained.

Let us now look at the treatment which Russia has received at our hands in respect to later declarations, in their connexion with later conquests.

In 1869 rumours began to get abroad that the military activities of the Russian Government were likely soon to

take the direction of Khiva. Towards the end of February in that year, our Ambassador at St. Petersburg had a conversation with the Emperor on the general subject of Central Asian politics, when the Emperor, whilst disclaiming any feeling of coveteousness in those regions, took care to remind her Majesty's Government of their own experience in India, and to point out that the Russian position in Asia was "one of extreme difficulty, in which our actions may depend not so much upon our own wishes as upon the course pursued towards us by the Native States around us." Nothing could be clearer than this for the purpose of distinguishing between engagements or promises of any kind, and explanations or assurances of policy, of wishes, and of intentions. But if anything more clear on this subject were desired, it was not long before it was supplied. On the 31st of November, in the same year (1869), Sir Andrew Buchanan had another conversation with Prince Gortchakow on the rumoured expedition against Khiva, in which the Russian Minister gave expression to very strong assurances of his policy and intention against farther extensions of territory in Asia, and resting the departures which had taken place from former intentions of a like kind, on the force of circumstances. Our Ambassador reported this conversation in a despatch dated December 1, 1869.* But as more definite information soon reached him in regard to the formidable character of the Expedition which was said to be in contemplation, he returned to the charge with Prince

* Ibid., No. 21, p. 19.

Gortchakow on the 29th of December. He placed in the Prince's hands an extract from his despatch reporting the previous conversation. The Prince read it with entire approval of its accuracy, but when he came to the passage that "he would not consent to an extension of the Empire" he stopped to observe and to explain that this "could only mean that he would disapprove of it, as he could not prevent such an eventuality, were the Emperor to decide in its favour."*

Under these circumstances, we have no excuse for the unfairness of representing the repeated intimations and assurances of Russia on this subject as meaning anything more than the Emperor and his Minister carefully explained them to mean. The unfairness is all the greater as we are generally guilty of it without the smallest reference to the question whether Russia had or had not a just ground of quarrel with the Khan of Khiva. Yet the case stated by Russia against the Khan, as reported by Sir A. Buchanan, is a case of indisputable justice, and even necessity. In June, 1871, Sir A. Buchanan explained that the principal object of Russia seemed to be "to secure a safe commercial route to Central Asia from the Caspian and her Trans-Caucasian provinces" This is in strict accordance with the declared policy of Russia in the Manifesto of 1864. But more than this. The suppression and punishment of piracy on land is as just a cause of war as the suppression of piracy by sea. It is not denied that the Khan of Khiva was simply the ruler of robber tribes, and that he lived upon the revenues

* Ibid., No. 25, p. 22.

of plunder. But in addition to these just causes of quarrel the Russian Government asserted that he held Russian subjects in captivity and slavery. No attempt is made to deny or to refute this assertion.

I am informed by my relative, Sir John McNeill, that as long as forty years ago, when he represented the British Government at the Court of Persia, he had to use his endeavours to redeem from captivity in Khiva a number of Russian subjects. I am also informed by Lord Northbrook that the Khivan Envoy who came to him at Simla in 1873 confessed that the Khan was in possession of Russian captives. The assertion, therefore, of the Russian Government, that it had just cause of complaint against the Khan, has not only never been refuted, but is one which we know to be consistent with all the probabilities of the case. Yet we, a Nation and a Government which spent some eleven millions in redeeming from captivity in Abyssinia a few subjects of the Queen, are never tired of complaining that the Emperor of Russia for similar reasons and for other reasons quite as good, and of far more permanent value, sent a military expedition against Khiva, and finally reduced that Khanate to a condition under which it could rob no more.* It is quite

---

* Sir Henry Rawlinson tells us that one of the consequences of the Russian conquest of Khiva was that the Khan lost his revenue from the outlying Turcoman tribes, "whose allegiance to him, never very willingly paid, has been further shattered by the abolition of the slave-trade in the Khiva market, and the consequent suppression of their means of livelihood."—*England and Russia in the East*, p. 330.

true that in 1873, Russia was induced by our persistent expressions of jealousy and remonstrance to repeat her assurances of intention, in words less guarded by express limitations than they had been before. These new assurances were given to Lord Granville on the 8th of January, 1873, by Count Schouvalow, when he was sent by the Emperor to London to communicate to the British Government his Majesty's assent to our long contention on the boundaries of Afghanistan. This was the main object of his mission; and the new assurances of policy in respect to Khiva seem to have been volunteered as upon subjects not immediately connected with the principal matter in hand. But those assurances of policy and of intention, strong as they were in particular expressions, have, as usual, been habitually misrepresented. Count Schouvalow declared that "not only was it far from the intentions of the Emperor to take possession of Khiva, but positive orders had been prepared to prevent it, and directions given that the conditions imposed should be such as could not in any way lead to a prolonged occupancy of Khiva."* These words, even if they were to be strictly construed as the record of a definite international engagement, which they certainly were not, would not prevent the subjugation of Khiva to the condition of a dependent State, nor would they prevent the annexation of some Khivan territory to the Russian Empire. It is probable that neither of these contingencies was then contemplated by the Emperor. But neither of them is

* Corresp. with Russia, Central Asia, 1873, No. 3, p. 13.

definitely excluded by the terms of Count Schouvalow's assurance. It is true that the general limitations which Russia had so often placed upon her assurances of intention in Central Asia, were not repeated by Count Schouvalow when he spoke of the Khivan Expedition. But most undue advantage is taken of this fact, when we forget that those limitations had always been explained to be inherent in the nature of the case, and that even if they had never been formally recorded, as they frequently had been, they ought to have been understood.

Accordingly, when in January, 1874, Lord Granville had to acknowledge the receipt of the Treaty with the Khan of Khiva which recorded the results of the Russian conquest, he very wisely declared that he saw no advantage in comparing those results with the "assurances of intention" which had been given by Count Schouvalow. Lord Granville carefully avoided calling them promises. He gave to them the correct name, and he absolutely refrained from those accusations of bad faith in which irresponsible writers have so freely indulged.*

We have now brought the narrative of events, so far as our direct relations with Russia through the Foreign Office are concerned, down to the Khivan Expedition, and to her acknowledgment of our contention respecting the boundaries and respecting the political position of Afghanistan. We have also, in connexion with this subject, somewhat anticipated the parallel events which were taking place in India, by indicating the changed conditions

* Russia, II., 1874, No. 2, p. 7.

of feeling under which Lord Lytton was sent out to India. But in order to understand clearly what was to follow, we must go back for a little to fill up the interval which elapsed between the Umballa Conference in 1869, and the violation of Lord Mayo's pledges which immediately followed when Lord Northbrook ceased to be the Viceroy of India, in April, 1876.

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA IN 1873 TO THE FRERE NOTE IN JANUARY, 1875.

WE have seen the impression which Lord Mayo derived from the language of Shere Ali at Umballa,—that the Ameer thought very little and cared even less about the Russian advances in Central Asia. Yet this was at a time when Russia had just established her paramount influence over his nearest neighbour—a neighbour intimately connected with all the revolutions in his own country—a neighbour whose country had been, and still was, the habitual refuge of defeated candidates for his throne. But although Lord Mayo was fully justified in this impression, and although it was evident that the mind of the Ameer was engrossed by the contest in which he had been engaged, and which was not even then absolutely closed,—so that he thought of nothing so much as his desire for a dynastic guarantee,—it does not follow that he was ignorant of the place which Russian advances had in the policy of the English Government. It is a vain attempt to conceal anything from Afghans as to the motives of our policy towards the Kingdom of Cabul. Even if it were our object to deceive them, it would be

impossible. Their suspicions outrun every possibility of concealment. Accordingly, there is curious evidence that at the Umballa Conference, Noor Mohammed, the trusted Minister of the Ameer, indicated a perfectly correct appreciation of the position of his country in its relation both to Russia and to England. At a meeting held on the 1st of April, 1869, he showed considerable suspicion about our professed eagerness to promote trade with Afghanistan. Mr. Seton Karr, the Foreign Secretary, and Major Pollock, the Commissioner, tried to reassure him. Noor Mohammed then said, "You have given us guns, treasure, &c. &c. You would not do so without some special motive. What is your motive?" The Foreign Secretary answered, "In order that the Government on our borders may be independent and strong, just as Cashmere and Khotul are;" explaining further what had been done in respect to the Cashmere succession. Upon this Noor Mohammed replied, apparently with some touch of fun, that he accepted the explanation, and "would not credit us with ulterior motives," and then added these significant words: "He hoped we should have a good understanding, and the advantage of it to us (the English) would be, that were the Russians or other enemy to come, even though the Afghans themselves could not successfully keep them out of the country, they could harass them in every way."*

The inference I draw from this remarkable observation

---

* Notes of Umballa Conference enclosed in Lord Mayo's letter of April 4, 1869.

of the Afghan Minister is that he was perfectly aware of the political object we had in view in supporting and strengthening the Afghan Kingdom, and that the indifference exhibited at that time both by him and by the Ameer on the subject of Russian advances, was due not only to the fact that they regarded foreign aggression as a distant danger, but also to the fact that they knew they could count on our own self-interest leading us to assist them if the danger should ever come nearer.

If, however, the mind of the Ameer had been under any anxiety on the subject of danger from Russia, that anxiety would have been removed by the information which Lord Mayo was able to communicate to him soon after the Umballa Conference—namely, the information that Russia had agreed to recognise, as belonging to Afghanistan, all the territories then in his actual possession. He had further, the friendly assurances of General Kaufmann, which Lord Mayo himself had taken the trouble of explaining to him as assurances with which the Viceroy was highly pleased. Further, he had the actual conduct of the Russian Governor-General in refusing to allow Abdul Rahman Khan to excite disturbances in Afghanistan, and also in arresting movements on the part of the Khan of Bokhara which compromised the peace of the Afghan frontier. On the other hand, Shere Ali himself had shown that he was fully aware of the condition on which our support was given to him—namely, the condition that he would abstain from aggression upon his neighbours, and especially on those immediate neighbours who were avowedly under the

influence and protection of Russia. In compliance with this condition, Shere Ali, under the influence and by the advice of the Government of India, had refrained from several frontier operations to which he would have been otherwise inclined, and in particular from annexing Kirkee and Charjui.* The Emperor of Russia had heartily acknowledged the good faith and the success with which the Government of India had been acting in this matter, and considered it as a gratifying proof of the good effects of the Agreement which had been arrived at between the two Powers in respect to their mutual relations in the East.

No occasion for any special communication with the Ameer arose during the rest of Lord Mayo's viceroyalty, which was terminated by his calamitous death in the spring of 1872, nor during the first year of the viceroyalty of his successor. Only one annoyance to the Ameer arose out of the policy of Lord Mayo, acting under the direction of the Government at home. There had been a long-standing dispute in respect to the boundaries of the Afghan and Persian Kingdoms in the province of Seistan. Lord Mayo, thinking that it might some day lead to complications, had readily agreed to a proposal that it should be settled by the arbitration of British officers, sent expressly to survey the country, and to adjust the line of frontier. The duty was assigned to, and was carefully executed by, General Sir F. Goldsmid, one of the ablest officers at the disposal of the Government of

* Afghanistan, I., 1878, No. 22, p. 105.

India, and having special qualifications for the service. General Sir Frederick Pollock lent his aid to Noor Mohammed, the Afghan Minister, in watching the Afghan case. The decision was one which did not give to the Ameer all that he considered to be his own. The device of settling such matters by arbitration, although eminently reasonable in itself, is one not yet familiar to Asiatics, and not readily understood by them. They do not easily believe in the perfect impartiality of anybody, and it is natural that in such cases they should regard an adverse decision with mortification and distrust.

We now come to the transactions which led to the Conferences at Simla in 1873 between Lord Northbrook and the Prime Minister of the Ameer. As on these transactions both the Simla Narrative of Lord Lytton, and the London Narrative of Lord Cranbrook, are little better than a mass of fiction, it will be necessary to state the facts accurately, and to confront them with those Narratives.

Early in March, 1873,* it became the duty of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to confirm the award which had been given in the Seistan Arbitration. Under the terms of the Arbitration this confirmation was final and binding, both on the Shah of Persia and on the Ameer of Cabul. It was well known how distasteful the result had been to the Ameer.

In connexion, therefore, with this Seistan Arbitration, and also in connexion with the final transactions between

* Afghan Corresp., II., 1878, p. 4.

the Cabinets of London and St. Petersburg on the boundaries of Afghanistan, it became desirable, in the spring of 1873, that the Government of India should have some more direct communication than usual with the Ameer, Shere Ali. On both these subjects, but especially on the first, Lord Northbrook thought it would be expedient to give him personal explanations tending to soothe irritation or to prevent misunderstanding. For these purposes, Lord Northbrook, through a letter from the Commissioner of Peshawur, which reached Cabul on the 27th of March,* requested the Ameer to receive a British officer at Cabul, or Jellalabad, or Candahar, or at any other place in Afghanistan which the Ameer might name —not, of course, as a resident Envoy, but on a special mission. True to the traditional policy of his family and race, the Ameer availed himself of the right which he had by Treaty and by the pledges of Lord Mayo, to intimate that he would prefer, in the first place at any rate, not to receive a British officer at Cabul, but to send his own Prime Minister to Simla. This reply was not given until the 14th of April, after long discussions in Durbar, at one of which the "Moonshee" of the British Agency was permitted to be present.† These debates showed great reluctance to abide by the Seistan award, and a disposition to use the Ameer's assent as a price to be given only in return for certain advantages which he had long desired. They show that the Ameer was reluctant even to send an Envoy of his own, and that this measure was referred

* Ibid., p. 5. Enclos. 2 in No. 2.
† Ibid., Enclos. 5, p. 7.

to as a concession on his part to the wishes of the Viceroy.* They showed also the usual jealousy and dread of the presence of a British Envoy in Cabul, and of the pressure he might put upon the Ameer to accept proposals which might be distasteful to him. In all this, however, Shere Ali was acting within his right—standing on the faith of Treaties, and on the pledges of Lord Mayo. The Viceroy, therefore, true, on his side, to the engagements and to the wise policy of his predecessors, abstained from pressing his request upon the Ameer, and at once, on the 25th of April, accepted the alternative he preferred.†

Let us now see how these facts are dealt with in the Simla and in the London Narratives. It suited the purpose with which both these Narratives were drawn up to represent the Ameer as having been at this time greatly alarmed by the advances of Russia, because this representation of the case helps to throw blame on Lord Northbrook for having (as alleged) refused to reassure him. Of course the fact that the Ameer did not seek any Conference at this time, but, on the contrary, only consented to it rather reluctantly, when it was proposed to him by the Government of India—is a fact which stands much in the way of such a representation of the case. Accordingly, both in the Simla Narrative and in the London Narrative, this fact is entirely suppressed, whilst, both by implication and by direct assertion, the impression is conveyed that the Ameer sought the

* Ibid., Enclos. 5 and 6, pp. 7, 8.
† Ibid., Enclos. 8, p. 9.

ference,—that he did so under the fear of Russian advances in Central Asia, and for the purpose of getting securities against them. The Simla Narrative, after quoting passages from the Durbar debate above mentioned, which did refer to Russia, proceeds thus (para. 12): "With these thoughts in his mind, his Highness deputed Synd Noor Mohammed Shah, in the summer of 1873, to wait upon Lord Northbrook, and submit this and other matters to the consideration of the Viceroy."*

It would be quite impossible to gather from this that it was the Viceroy who had desired to open special communications with the Ameer, and that Shere Ali only offered to send his Minister in order to avoid receiving a British Envoy. But the London Narrative improves upon its Simla prototype. It not only represents that the Ameer was moved to send his Minister from his fear of Russia, but it professes to tell us more exactly how that fear then specially arose. It was the fall of Khiva. "The capture of Khiva," says paragraph 8 of the London Narrative, "by the forces of the Czar, in the spring of 1873, and the total subordination of that Khanate to Russia, caused Shere Ali considerable alarm, &c. Actuated by his fears on this score, his Highness sent a special Envoy to Simla in the summer of that year, charged with the duty of expressing them to the Government of India."† Now it so happens, as we have seen, that the Ameer's proposal to send his Minister was made on the 14th of April, whilst the capture of Khiva did not take place till

* Ibid., p. 162. † Ibid., p. 262.

the 10th of June. Even if the Ameer had possessed the power of seeing what was then going on at the distance of some 800 or 900 miles across the deserts of Central Asia, he would not have been much alarmed on account of Russian advances. On that very day, the 14th of April, Kaufmann and all his force were at the point of death from thirst and fatigue, in their advance on Khiva. They were saved only by the timely intervention of a "ragged Kirghiz," who led them to some wells. It was not till the 23rd of May, that Kaufmann reached the Oxus with only 1200 camels remaining out of the 10,000 with which the Expedition had been provided.* As for the "total subordination of the Khanate of Khiva to Russia," this was not effected till the date of the Treaty, which was not concluded till the 12th of August, and was not published at St. Petersburg till the 12th of December.† The statement, therefore, in the London Narrative, as to the circumstances which led to the Simla Conferences of 1873, is entirely misleading, and points to conclusions, in respect to the Ameer's motives, with which the real facts are entirely inconsistent. These facts must have been well known both at Calcutta and at the India Office, and they ought to have been correctly given.

The statement made both in the Simla and in the London Narrative as to the Ameer's condition of mind when he sent his Minister, Noor Mohammed, to confer with the Viceroy, is a statement founded mainly on the

---

* Schuyler's Turkistan, Vol. ii. p. 341.

† Russia, II., 1874, No. 2, p. 6.

reports of the Ameer's conversations with our native Agent at Cabul, and especially on those which were reported by that Agent on the 5th of May, 1873.* In the Simla Narrative (par. 11), some quotations are given from this Report of the language held by the Ameer; but these quotations are very partial, and avoid any reference to the most important passages which best indicate the opinions, the feelings, and the desires of the Ameer.

When we turn to the account given by our native Agent of the talk of the Ameer, it will be found that he referred, indeed, to the probability that Russia would soon take possession both of Khiva and of Merve, as one of the well-known sources of British anxiety and alarm. Any information he possessed about "the preparations for an advance of a Russian Army" seems to have been derived from "the English papers."† From this source apparently, he said that Merve would be taken by Russia "either in the current year or the next." This was overshooting the mark indeed. But it shows what his mark was. It was his object and his game to work upon our alarm, and he dwelt upon the dangers of Russian aggression, as these had been long known, and long familiar to the Ameer, ever since the Umballa Conference,—to which strange to say, he expressly referred, as the starting-point of his communications with the Government of India upon the subject. Considering the impression of Lord Mayo

* Ibid., No. 26, Inclos. 2, pp. 110, 111.
† Afghan Corresp., II., 1878, No. 2, Enclos. 3. p. 6.

that he did not then attach any importance to it, and considering that the Viceroy's express statement to me that Russia was never mentioned except incidentally during the whole conferences, it becomes clear that in the preceding narrative I have not over-estimated the significance of the language—apparently incidental—which was held on the 1st of April, 1869, at Umballa, by Noor Mohammed, in reference to the real position of the Afghan Kingdom in the policy of the British Government. The whole language of Shere Ali in the first week of May, 1873, was simply an amplification of the language of his Minister on that occasion in April, 1869. Shere Ali knew that we should defend him against external aggression, not for his sake, but for our own. He indicated unmistakably that he put the same interpretation upon all our efforts on his behalf which Noor Mohammed had put upon our presents at Umballa of money and of guns. He even went the length of implying that the security of the Afghan border was more our affair than his. He declared that at the Umballa Conference he had said so to Lord Mayo, "exonerating himself from making arrangements for that security."* This conviction that our fear of Russia, and our own interests in resisting her, had got for him all he had received, animates the whole of his conversation. He trades upon our fear of Russia as a means of getting more. In the handling of this subject he shows great intelligence, and a very considerable extent of information. It may be

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 26, Enclos. 2, p. 110.

said that the whole literature of Anglo-Indian Russophobia seems to have been familiar to him. All the points common to that school of opinion are adroitly brought to bear. He refers to the Russian denunciation of the Black Sea clauses in the Treaty of 1856, and founds upon it the usual inferences about the slipperiness of Russian diplomacy. He excites our jealousy about Merve as an approach to Herat, and he uses this jealousy to denounce our approval of the Seistan Arbitration. He rather sneers at the long difficulty which had arisen with Russia about the definition of the northern boundaries of his Kingdom, and says, "he was at a loss to surmise" what that difficulty was. He warns us that very soon the Russians would make communications which would exercise some influence in his country. Alternating with these stimulants to our fears and to our jealousy, he holds out certain promises based upon his estimate of our policy, and that estimate he explains to be, "that the border of Afghanistan is in truth the border of India." And again that the "interests of the Afghan and English Governments are identical." Counting on the efficacy of these motives, heated to red heat by his warnings and exhortations, he expected us to give him "great assistance in money and in ammunition of war," and "great aid for the construction of strong forts throughout the Afghan northern border." But more than this. These anxieties for a frontier which was "also ours" were associated with other anxieties about himself personally. Domestic troubles were never out of his mind; and his old demand for a dynastic guarantee betrays itself with little

disguise. But feeling also that he wanted some personal security in the event of misfortune, "it was rather advisable," he said, "that the British Government, for its own and for his satisfaction, should set apart some property, either in India or in Europe, for his support, that he might retire there with his family and children, and find both accommodation and maintenance there." Finally, he expresses a wish that we should "commence forthwith to organise the Afghan troops, and to send from time to time large amounts of money with great numbers of guns and magazine stores, in order that he might steadily be able in a few years to satisfactorily strengthen the Afghan Kingdom."*

Such is the condition of mind and such the conversation on the part of the Ameer, which is represented in the Simla and London Narratives as indicating on the part of Shere Ali a sincere alarm on account of the advances of Russia, and an anxiety to be reassured by fresh promises supplementary to those which had been already given. This representation of the conversation of the Ameer seems to me obviously erroneous. It is a conversation, on the contrary, which demonstrated that Shere Ali relied absolutely on our own sense of self-interest as our inducement to defend his Kingdom, and that he entertained an overweening confidence in his power of working on this motive to get out of us almost anything he wished to ask.

The inconvenience of this condition of affairs lay in

* Ibid. p. iii.

the fact that the Ameer's estimate of our position and of our policy was substantially correct. He was right in thinking that our interest in Afghanistan was an interest of our own. It was perfectly natural that he should count upon this, and that he should desire to discount it also to the largest possible extent.

Although the particular conversation of May was not known to us at the India Office in the spring and summer of 1873, we did know quite enough to make us sure that the Ameer of Cabul had been aware, ever since the Umballa Conference, that we considered it part of our Indian Policy to maintain the "integrity and independence" of Afghanistan. The whole course of negotiations since, and our repeated communications both to him and to the Russian Government, had made this clearly understood between all the parties concerned. General Kaufmann had formally addressed the Ameer as a Prince under British protection, and two successive Viceroys had approved the letters and communications between the Ameer and Russian authorities in which this relation was assumed. We knew that the Ameer was disposed to make this acknowledged policy of the British Government the ground and the plea for making demands upon us which it would have been very unwise to grant,—the risk of which had been indicated by sad experience,—and the impolicy of which had been denounced at a later period by the detailed arguments of Lord Lawrence and of Lord Mayo.

It was under these circumstances that Lord Northbrook, in anticipation of the approaching Conference

with Noor Mohammed, telegraphed to me that he proposed to inform the Cabul Envoy of the sense of a paragraph in a despatch which had not then reached me. It was a despatch summing up the results of the long negotiations with Russia which had then been concluded, and its 18th paragraph was devoted to setting forth the fundamental principle of that negotiation, that the "complete independence of Afghanistan was so important to the interests of British India, that the Government of India could not look upon an attack on Afghanistan with indifference." It added that "so long as the Ameer continued, as he had hitherto done, to act in accordance with our advice in his relations with his neighbours, he would naturally receive material assistance from us, and that circumstances might occur under which we should consider it incumbent upon us to recommend the Indian Government to render him such assistance."* This was the paragraph, of which Lord Northbrook proposed, by telegraph on the 27th of June, to communicate the sense to the Envoy of the Ameer.†

It did not appear to me at the time that this proposed communication to the Ameer would be of much value. In its terms, carefully guarded as they were, it seemed to contain nothing that the Ameer did not know before, and indeed to fall greatly short of the interpretation he had shown signs of putting upon the assurances already given to him. Having, however, the greatest confidence in the discretion of the Viceroy, I contented myself with reply-

* Ibid., No. 21, p. 102. † Ibid.

ing, by telegraph on the 1st of July, that, whilst I did not object to the general sense of the paragraph as a fitting "communication to Russia from the Foreign Office," I considered that "great caution was necessary in assuring the Ameer of material assistance which might raise undue and unfounded expectation." I added, "He already shows symptoms of claiming more than we may wish to give."*

Accordingly when, eleven days after this telegram had been sent, the Conferences with the Cabul Envoy began at Simla, Lord Northbrook found that his first business was to disabuse the mind of the Afghan Minister of the extravagant and unwarrantable interpretations which he and the Cabul Durbar were disposed to entertain. Instead of under-estimating, they immensely over-estimated the sweep and bearing of the friendly assurances which had been given to them by Lord Lawrence and by Lord Mayo. They spoke as if the British Government "had bound itself to comply with any request preferred by the Ameer." This is the account given by Lord Northbrook himself in his subsequent account of the Simla Conferences.†

It will be seen that Lord Northbrook found himself very much in the same position as that in which Lord Mayo had found himself at Umballa in 1869. That is to say, he found himself in the presence of extravagant expectations, and of demands which it was impossible for him to concede. The Viceroy pursued the same wise

* Ibid., No. 23, p. 108. † Ibid., No. 26, p. 109.

course which, under similar circumstances, had been pursued by his predecessor. He determined to offer the Ameer everything that could be reasonably given, but resolutely to maintain the freedom of the British Government to judge of every contingency as it might arise.

The first formal Conference with the Minister of the Ameer took place on the 12th of July. At this meeting the Viceroy explained fully to the Envoy the terms and the effect of the final Agreement between England and Russia as to the boundaries of Afghanistan, and the effect it had in giving practical force and definite meaning to the long-standing Agreement that the Kingdom of Cabul was to be outside the sphere of Russian influence in Asia. He told the Afghan Minister that "the British Government would be prepared to use their best endeavours to maintain the frontier intact, so long as the Ameer or the Ruler of Afghanistan followed their advice as regards his external relations, and abstained from encroachments upon his neighbours." Again, somewhat more definitely, the Viceroy told him that "in the event of any aggression from without, if British influence were invoked, and failed by negotiation to effect a satisfactory settlement, it was probable that the British Government would in that case afford the Ruler of Afghanistan material assistance in repelling an invader." The Envoy declared that the "rapid advances made by the Russians in Central Asia had aroused the gravest apprehensions in the minds of the people of Afghanistan," who "could place no confidence in them, and would never rest satisfied unless they were assured of the aid of the

British Government." The further discussion of the subject was reserved for another day.*

It now appeared to Lord Northbrook that whatever might be the real aims or motives of the Cabul Envoy in giving expression to these fears of Russia, and in asking for further engagements on the part of the British Government, it would be possible with safety to give a somewhat fuller, and more definite, expression to the settled policy of the Government than had been given in Lord Mayo's letter of 1869, or in any subsequent formal communications. Under this impression, twelve days after the first Conference with the Envoy, and six days before the next, he telegraphed to me on the 24th of July that the Ameer of Cabul was alarmed at Russian progress, was dissatisfied with general assurances, and was anxious to know definitely how far he could rely on our help if invaded. The Viceroy proposed to "assure him that if he unreservedly accepted and acted on our advice in all external relations, we would help him with money, arms, and troops, if necessary, to expel unprovoked invasion. We to be the judge of the necessity."† To this I replied on the 26th, after consulting the Cabinet, that we thought the Viceroy should "inform the Ameer that we did not at all share his alarm, and considered there was no cause for it; but that he might assure him we should maintain our settled policy in favour of Afghanistan, if he abided by our advice in external affairs."‡ The Viceroy interpreted this reply as we intended him to interpret it—namely, as

* Ibid., No. 26, Inclos. 4, p. 112.

† Ibid., No. 24, p. 108. ‡ Ibid., No. 25, p. 108.

sanctioning his proposed communication to the Envoy, but with the important preliminary declaration that we did not share in those fears, or alleged fears, of Russian aggression, on which he and his master seemed disposed to found the most unreasonable and extravagant expectations.

At the next Conference, on the 30th of July, Lord Northbrook soon found that all our caution and his own were fully needed. He found the Afghan Minister under the impression that the British Government were already "pledged to comply with any request for assistance preferred by the Ameer." The language of Noor Mohammed seems to have been almost a repetition of the Ameer's absurd talk to our native Agent at Cabul early in May. He wanted supplies of money and of arms. He pretended that the army he had already raised had been so raised on the faith of the promises of Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo. He demanded that the British Government, besides promising to assist the Ameer with money and with arms, according to the circumstances of the case, should also engage to have an army at his disposal, to be sent in at his request, to take whatever route he might require,* and to be immediately sent out again when it had done his work for him. No concessions towards the British Government were offered on behalf of the Ameer in return for these demands—no proposal that it should enjoy greater powers of control, or even larger opportunities of observation.

---

* Lord Northbrook's Memorandum, para. 18.

No offer was made to receive Envoys, or to let go the hold of the Ameer on Lord Mayo's pledge on the subject of British officers.*

Such were the modest and reasonable demands, made by Noor Mohammed, and urged upon the Viceroy by all those appeals to our fear and to our jealousy of Russia in which, doubtless, he had been well instructed by the Anglo-Indian press.

It was indeed high time to give some intimation to the Ameer in the sense of the message from the Cabinet. It was important to let him understand that we were not quite so timorous as he supposed, and to remind him that at the close of a long and difficult negotiation, during which Russia had behaved with entire good faith towards him and towards ourselves, we did not consider him justified in the pleas he put forward for unlimited demands upon us.

On the other hand, not to deal too seriously with the natural and transparent devices of the Ameer, the Viceroy determined to give to Noor Mohammed the fuller and more definite assurance which he had sought and had obtained our permission to give. Accordingly, on the 30th of July, Lord Northbrook, after having explained to the Envoy that the British Government did not share the Ameer's apprehensions in respect to Russia, informed him that in the event of any actual or threatened aggression, it would be his duty to refer the question to the British Government, who would endeavour

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 26, Inclos. 5, pp. 112, 113.

by negotiation and by every means in their power to settle the matter and avert hostilities. Should these endeavours to bring about an amicable settlement prove fruitless, Lord Northbrook gave the formal pledge that the British Government "were prepared to assure the Ameer that they would afford him assistance in the shape of arms and money, and would also, in case of necessity, aid him with troops."*

It will be observed that in this assurance the qualifying word "probably," which had been used before, was intentionally omitted. Besides this very definite assurance for the future, a present supply of ten lacs of rupees, besides five lacs more to be spent in arms, were placed at the disposal of the Ameer. Moreover, further discussion was by no means refused on the large and vague demands made by the Ameer in reference to the frontier defences of Afghanistan. The subject was one of great importance, and must necessarily involve many conditions on our part. But the Envoy manifested doubt how far his instructions justified him in committing himself to any definite arrangement. It is, indeed, evident from the debate in the Cabul Durbar, which had been reported by our native Agent in April, that the Ameer had sent his Minister mainly to find out what we had to tell him, and how much he could get out of us, but with no instructions or authority to offer anything on his own part. Mr. Aitchison, who was Foreign Secretary to the Government of India at that time, and who conducted the

* Ibid., p 114.

Conferences with Noor Mohammed, has informed Lord Northbrook in a recent letter (dated Dec. 11, 1878) that the Afghan Envoy led him to believe that his master would not receive British officers as residents in his Kingdom, even in consideration of a guarantee that we should defend Afghanistan as we should defend British territory. Mr. Aitchison adds that Noor Mohammed had no instructions even to discuss such a subject with the Viceroy. Lord Northbrook, under these circumstances, had no other course open to him than to postpone the settlement of any further questions to a more favourable opportunity.*

Such are the transactions of which, in the London Narrative, the Government have presented the following as a truthful account :—

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

Paragraph 9.—" Finding that the object of the Ameer was to ascertain definitely how far he might rely on the help of the British Government if his territories were threatened by Russia, Lord Northbrook's Government

* Ibid., No. 26, p. 109.

was prepared to assure him that, under certain conditions, the Government of India would assist him to repel unprovoked aggression. But her Majesty's Government did not share his Highness's apprehension, and the Viceroy ultimately informed the Ameer that the discussion of the question would be best postponed to a more convenient season."

It will be seen that this statement of the facts is erroneous in everything except in a few particulars. Like one of those specimens of quartz in which no gold is visible, but which is rich in the uniform diffusion of the precious metal, this narrative presents no actual misstatement to the eye, but is permeated with misrepresentation throughout its substance. It purports to set forth the circumstances which led Shere Ali to send his Minister to meet Lord Northbrook. It purports to give us the reply of the Government at home to a message from the Viceroy. It purports to tell us what the action of the Viceroy was when he received that message. It purports to explain why certain parts of the discussion were postponed to another time. Of every one of these things it gives a wrong account. It is not true, as is implied, that the Ameer sent his Envoy because he was alarmed by the Russian conquest of Khiva. It is not true that the Government reply to Lord Northbrook's message consisted of a disclaimer of the alleged apprehensions of the Ameer. It is not true that the Viceroy was prevented by that message from giving to Shere Ali the assurance which he had asked leave to give. It is not true that the final postponement of certain questions stood in the connexion in which it is presented.

But such mere negations do not at all exhaust the wealth of these famous paragraphs in the peculiar characteristics for which they have acquired a just celebrity. There is in them a perfect union between the two great elements of all erroneous representation—namely, the suppression of things which are important facts, and the suggestion of things which are not facts at all. The ingenuity of the composition is a study. In the minuteness of the touches by which an immense breadth of effect is produced, we recognise the hand of a master. The introduction of the single word "but" just at the proper place, does great service. It suggests opposition and antagonism where there was none; and like the action of a pointsman upon a railway, it turns off all the following train of facts into the track which is desired. Some of the devices, however, are rather gross. For example, the quotation of one half of a telegraphic message, and the suppression of the other half, exhibits more recklessness than skill. In like manner the total suppression of the fact that the Viceroy gave any assurances at all to the Ameer, is an expedient similar in kind. Perhaps it was too much to expect that the authors of the London Narrative should have pointed out the difference between the assurance which Lord Northbrook gave on the 12th of July, before he had asked and received fresh authority from the Government, and the much more unqualified assurance which he gave on the 24th after he had received that authority. This is one of the facts which is of the highest importance in itself and in its bearings. It is one which could not have been omitted by

an historian of those facts who was careful and conscientious in his account of them. It might, however, be easily overlooked by a careless reader, or by a heated partisan. But to omit in a narrative which professes to give an account of these transactions any notice whatever of the fact that the Viceroy did give some assurances to the Ameer in the sense in which he had desired to give them, is to be guilty of an unpardonable suppression of the truth. In like manner, the statement that Lord Northbrook postponed certain discussions on the conditions to be attached to our support of the Ameer, and to conceal the fact that this postponement arose out of the circumstance that the Envoy doubted his own authority to agree to any conditions at all, is another very wide departure from historical fidelity. Finally, the phrase selected to express the mind in which the Viceroy resorted to this postponement—the "convenient season" which carries us back to the words of Felix—is an unmistakable indication of the *animus* of the whole.

So far from Lord Northbrook having gratuitously postponed further discussion with the Ameer on the defences of his frontier to a "more convenient season," he expressed in his official despatch his "trust that the matter might be discussed with the Ameer in person."* With reference to some important frontier questions, the Envoy was charged on his return to his master with a Memorandum, in which it was suggested that a British officer of rank, with a competent staff, should be sent to

* Ibid., No. 26, p. 109.

examine thoroughly the Northern and North-Western frontiers of Afghanistan, and then should confer personally with the Ameer regarding the condition of the border, and might submit the opinions he had formed on the whole question of the defences of his frontier.* In forwarding this proposal to me, Lord Northbrook explained that although the Government of India thought that the presence of accredited British officers at Cabul, Herat, and possibly also at Candahar, would for many reasons be desirable, they were fully alive to the difficulties in the way of such a measure, until the objects and policy of the British Government were more clearly understood and appreciated in Afghanistan. It was possible that some of those difficulties might be removed by personal communication.

We have seen that in the private and confidential conversations which had taken place at Simla with Noor Mohammed, this subject had been broached. A very large amount of respect seems to me to be due to that Minister from the accounts we have of his conduct on these occasions. He seems to me to have put the very unreasonable demands of the Ameer in the least unreasonable aspect which could be given to them, and to have uniformly explained his own views with truth and candour. In this matter of the mission of British officers his language was that, "speaking as a friend, and in the interests both of his own and of the British Government, he could not recommend that a specific request should

* Ibid., No. 26, Inclos. 6, p. 115.

be preferred to the Ameer for British officers to be stationed at certain given places." To this measure it is evident that the Ameer's objections still continued to be insuperable, and as he knew or suspected that special Envoys would probably enter upon the subject, and urge upon him a change of policy, his objection very rationally extended even to such temporary missions. On the other hand, the Government of India knew its own pledges, and was determined to fulfil its promises. To put upon the Ameer any pressure upon this subject would have been an unquestionable breach of these. Shere Ali did not respond to the proposal of Lord Northbrook, and it necessarily fell through in consequence. There was nothing new in this—nothing in the least suspicious. Shere Ali simply continued in the same mind upon this question in which Lord Mayo found him at Umballa, and Lord Northbrook respected the pledges which had been given there.

On the 13th of November the Ameer replied to the Viceroy's letter of the 15th of September. It is undoubtedly rather a sulky letter. But much allowance ought to be made for the position of the Ameer. Considering the expectations which we have seen that he entertained,—considering 'the immense and unconditional advantages which he had expected to extract from us by playing on our fear of Russia,—considering, too, the deep mortification with which he evidently regarded the Seistan arbitration, it is not surprising that he should have expressed dissatisfaction. After all, he only intimated that if he was to get no more than Lord

Lawrence and Lord Mayo had given him, it was useless to send Noor Mohammed to Simla. He had got something more in an assurance which was more distinct. But as compared with what he wanted, the difference may have been inappreciable to him. He showed his irritation also by the terms in which he declined to allow a British officer to pass through his dominions. He showed, likewise, another feeling,—that of suspicion, by not taking possession of the sum of money which the Viceroy placed at his disposal. There is the best reason to believe that the cause of this was that he suspected the money to be the price of some renewed proposal to send British officers into his country. He accepted the arms at once, because he had no such fear in respect to them. Under all these circumstances his dissatisfaction was not unnatural. But in spite of it all, in his letter of the 13th November the Ameer fell back with confidence on the written pledges which he held from Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo. "The understanding arrived at in Umballa was quite sufficient"—a significant observation, which probably referred to the revival of the question about British officers. "As long as the beneficent British Government continued its friendship, we might be assured of his."*

The Viceroy's answer to this effusion, which was dated January 23rd, 1874, was the model of what such an answer ought to be, from a powerful Government to a semi-barbarous Sovereign, whose irritation was under the

* Ibid., No. 28, Inclos. 1, p. 119.

circumstances not unnatural,—whom it was inexpedient to offend, and undignified to bully. Lord Northbrook expressed regret that the Ameer had not favoured him with an expression of his views on the proposals made in the Viceroy's former letter. Passing from this, he reminded Shere Ali that the assurances of support he had just given at Simla were "even more explicit than those contained in the auspicious writings of Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo." He reproached the Ameer gently—not for refusing a passage through his dominions to the British officer for whom the leave had been asked, but—for the want of courtesy with which this refusal had been marked in the absence of any expression of regret. The letter concluded by a cordial sympathising assurance that the difficulties of his position in receiving guests in Afghanistan were fully understood, as well as the more important political anxieties by which he was beset.*

This letter drew from the Ameer a remarkable reply. It was dated the 10th of April, 1874. It was much more courteous in tone. It gave a reasonable excuse for objecting to the return of Mr. Forsyth from Yarkand through Afghanistan, on the ground that he was about to commence hostilities against his son Yakoob Khan. But the most important paragraph seems to be one in which he again refers to the cherished memories of Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo. It is evident that his fears and suspicions had been deeply stirred by the renewed

* Ibid., No. 28, Inclos. 2, p. 120.

discussion about the reception of British officers, even although the Government of India had carefully abstained from doing more than suggesting a mission in response to what seemed to be one of his own requirements. His language of appeal to the authority and to the promises of his old friends is almost passionate. "Your Excellency! Since Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo, especially the former, possessed an intimate knowledge of Afghanistan and its frontiers, and your Excellency must certainly have also acquired the same knowledge, I, therefore, am desirous that your Excellency, after full and careful consideration of the approval expressed by her Majesty the Queen, the 'Sunnud' of Lord Lawrence, and the decision of Lord Mayo, will remain firm and constant, in order that Afghanistan and its territories may be maintained inviolate and secure."*

About three months after the Simla Conferences Shere Ali at last announced to the Government of India that he had appointed Abdoolah Jan his Heir-apparent. He had come to this resolution, as of course he had a perfect right to do, without taking any counsel or advice from the British Government. Yet that Government knew that a decision which set aside Yakoob Khan, to whom the Ameer was mainly indebted for the recovery of his throne, was a decision which in all human probability doomed the country to another disputed succession, and to another bloody civil war. Lord Northbrook therefore sent a letter of acknowledgment, strictly confined to the

* Ibid., No. 29, Inclos. 1, p. 123.

language which had been used in 1858 in reply to Dost Mohammed, when he intimated the selection of Shere Ali in supercession of his elder brother.*

In November, 1874, the Viceroy had to make a communication to the Ameer which, though a real proof of friendship, could not fail to disturb him much. Shere Ali had invited his son Yakoob Khan to come under a "safe conduct" to Cabul: and when the Sirdar came, on the faith of the safe conduct, it had been violated, and he had been placed under arrest. It appeared to Lord Northbrook, as it had before appeared under less serious circumstances to Lord Mayo, that this was a matter on which it was right and necessary to express the friendly opinion of the head of the Indian Government. This opinion was communicated to the Ameer by our native Agent at Cabul. It urged upon him strongly to keep faith with his son, and added that by so doing he would maintain his own good name, and the friendship of the British Government.† Although this message from the Viceroy was afterwards referred to as having offended the Ameer, he sent on the 14th December, 1874, through our Agent at Cabul, a civil answer, and acknowledged the advice given to him as dictated by "friendship and well-wishing."‡

In February, 1874, there was a change of Government at home. Subsequent to this date I have, of course, no personal knowledge of the course of Indian affairs. But

---

* Ibid., No. 27, p. 117. † Ibid., No. 30, Inclos. 5, p. 126.
‡ Ibid., No. 30A, Inclos. 2, p. 128.

as in the preceding narrative, subsequent to the Umballa Conference in 1869, I have relied exclusively on the papers presented to Parliament, or on papers equally authentic, so now for the period subsequent to February, 1874, I shall follow the indications of a change of policy as they are to be found there.

In the first place, then, it is to be observed that the present Government had been very nearly a year in office before any such indications were given. The Government came into office in February, 1874, and the first despatch of Lord Salisbury, desiring the Government of India to reopen the question of British officers as Political Agents in Afghanistan, was dated January 22nd, 1875.*

Before examining the terms of that despatch it is natural to look round us and see whether any, and if any, what events had happened during the year from February, 1874, to January 22, 1875.

Just before the late Government left office, Lord Granville was called upon to reply to the Russian announcement of the Khivan Treaty. He did so in a despatch dated January 4, 1874. It recapitulated, in significant but friendly terms, the oft-repeated story of the Russian advances in Central Asia, acknowledged the good faith with which Russia had acted on the Agreement about Afghanistan since it had been concluded, set forth that the Ameer had equally acted on our advice in restraining Turkomans, and intimated that Shere Ali was then again disturbed by rumours of a Russian expedition against

* Ibid., No. 31, p. 128.

Merve. Lord Granville then repeated the declaration that we looked upon the independence of Afghanistan as a matter of great importance to the security of British India, and to the tranquillity of Asia. If Russia, by any new expedition, were to drive the Turkomans into the Ameer's dominions, he might labour under a double hardship, first in the disturbance of his dominions, and secondly in being held responsible for the control of those wild tribes.*

To this the Russian Government replied on the 21st of January, 1874, that they remained as faithful as ever to the old Agreement. It repeated the assurance that the Imperial Cabinet "continued to consider Afghanistan as entirely beyond its sphere of action." But here the Russian Cabinet stopped. They would not import into that Agreement a new and a different line of limitation than that of the Afghan frontier. This was what they had agreed to, and by this they would abide. They declared, indeed, that Shere Ali's fear of an expedition against Merve was groundless, inasmuch as they "had no intention of undertaking an expedition against the Turkomans." But, warned apparently by accusations of bad faith, founded on the assumption that intimations of intention or denials of intention, are equivalent to pledges, Prince Gortchakow, in this despatch, took care to add that he spoke of nothing but a simple intention. "It depended entirely on them (the Turkomans) to live on good terms with us . . . . but if these turbulent

* Russia, II., 1874, No. 2, pp. 6, 9.

tribes were to take to attacking or plundering us, we should be compelled to punish them. Russia would rely on the Ameer to warn the Turkomans not to expect protection from him, and she would rely also on the influence of the English Government to give him effective advice upon the subject."* There was at least no deception in this despatch. Russia kept her freedom. Her Agreement had regard to Afghanistan, and not to anything beyond it. It concluded by saying that the "two Governments had an equal interest in not allowing their good relations to be disturbed by the intrigues of Asiatic Khans, and that so long as they both acted together with a feeling of mutual confidence and good will, the tranquillity of Central Asia would be sufficiently guaranteed."

Such was the condition of things when the present Government came into office. It was a condition of things in which Russia had given ample notice, that while she held by the engagement with us on the subject of Afghanistan, she would not extend it to any part of Central Asia outside that Kingdom, and, in particular, that she held herself free to deal, as occasion might require, with the predatory Turkomans, whether in Merve or elsewhere. In March, 1874, however, Prince Gortchakow directed Baron Brünow to assure Lord Derby that the Emperor had given positive orders to stop any expedition against the Turkomans in the direction of Merve. This was expressly said in connexion with the approach-

* Ibid., No. 3, pp. 10, 11.

ing visit of the Emperor to England, and appears to have been a sort of condescension to a national weakness, "so that no cloud might be on the political horizon during his august master's visit to London."* In June, 1874, the Russian Government had its turn of asking us whether certain reports were true of our giving aid to the ruler of Yarkand, and this was categorically denied by the Viceroy.

Nevertheless, at this very time, the vigilance of our diplomatists had discovered a fresh cause of anxiety in the reported proceedings of a General Llamakin, who was the newly-appointed Governor of the Russian Provinces on the Caspian (Krasnovodsk). On the 23rd of June, 1874, our Ambassador at St. Petersburg had heard that this functionary had addressed a Circular Letter to the Turkoman tribes of the Attrek and Goorgan Rivers, giving them warnings and advice. An account of this letter had appeared in the *Times* of the 17th of June, which pointed out that the Turkomans thus addressed were tribes which "nomadised" between the Caspian and the fort of Karis, "the latter being half-way to Merve." The same account mentioned as a fact that several Russian caravans had been recently plundered by the Turkomans of Merve, and that a Russian soldier was kept in captivity there. The despatch from Lord Augustus Loftus reporting the explanations given to him on these matters, was dated the 23rd, and was received in London on the 29th of June.† No anxiety, however, seems to

* Central Asia, I., 1878, No. 9, p. 12.
† Ibid., No. 18, p. 18.

have been expressed upon the subject, either by the Foreign Office or by the India Office. A month later, on the 2nd of August, a copy of the Circular Letter of General Llamakin was received at the Foreign Office from our Envoy at the Court of Persia.* He explained that he was informed on good authority that this Circular had been addressed to the whole of the Turkoman tribes occupying the line of country between the Caspian, Merve, and Charjui on the Oxus. The Circular itself does not say so, but as the roving tribes of those regions have no fixed limits to their wanderings, it was probable that it was addressed to "all whom it might concern." Expressly, however, it seems to be addressed to the Turkomans on "the Attrek and Goorgan," this being the area over which the General intimated that he had "supreme authority." It was simply an elaborate warning against the plundering of caravans, an exhortation to peace, and a recommendation of the benefits of commerce. It implies, indeed, throughout, the assertion of supremacy, and of the power and will to enforce obedience.

Again, no notice was taken of this more definite information either by the Foreign Secretary or the Indian Secretary of State. It does not seem to have occurred to either of them that the Circular of General Llamakin could form the subject of remonstrance or even of inquiry. It was not until it had gone round by way of Calcutta that anything appears to have occurred to anybody on the subject. But the Indian Government,

* Ibid., No. 20, p. 19.

habitually wakeful and susceptible on Central Asian politics, took alarm. On the 8th of September, Lord Northbrook wrote a despatch to Lord Salisbury, pointing out that if the Circular sent by Mr. Thomson, from Teheran, were genuine, "the Persian territory between the Attrek and the Goorgan is now practically annexed to the Russian dominions, and authority is assumed in respect to the whole Turkoman country to the borders of Afghanistan." The Government of India added—"We are of opinion that these proceedings cannot fail to excite uneasiness and alarm in the minds of our Persian and Afghan allies, and that they demand the serious attention of her Majesty's Government."*

This despatch from Lord Northbrook did not reach London till the 30th of October, and was at once formally referred to the Foreign Office "for the information and consideration of Lord Derby."

The Foreign Secretary was then awakened to the fact, of which no previous notice had been taken, that the Circular of General Llamakin, in styling himself "Commander of the Turkoman tribes of the Attrek and the Goorgan," involved an assumption of Russian Sovereignty over a country which had always been considered to belong to Persia. If this was so, it ought not to have been left to Lord Northbrook to point it out. It was no matter of rumour, or of constructive inference. It was on the face of the document. Yet it was not until it had been three months in possession of the Foreign

* Ibid., No. 21, p. 20.

Office, and not until the Government of India had fastened on the point, that the Government awoke to it as a fact of any significance whatever. It was only on the 6th of November, that Lord Derby directed Lord Augustus Loftus to point out to the Russian Chancellor that the "territory between the Attrek and the Goorgan was unquestionably Persian territory, in which General Llamakin would not be justified in interfering." Finally, he was instructed to "express a hope that the Government of the Emperor would impress upon General Llamakin the expediency of abstaining from molesting the tribes who frequent the country to the south of the Attrek."*

When this despatch reached St. Petersburg, on the 14th December, 1874, it led to a little sparring between the British Ambassador and M. de Westmann, who was the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs in the absence of Prince Gortchakow. M. de Westmann very naturally observed, that if Russia had done any wrong to Persia it was the business of Persia, and not of England, to complain. He did not refuse to explain that there had been a correspondence between the Imperial and Persian Governments on the subject, and that the explanations offered by Russia had been perfectly satisfactory to the Shah. Nor did M. de Westmann deny that the Circular of General Llamakin had given to the tribes he addressed a name or description which was liable to misapprehension. But he gave the not unreasonable explanation that the Turkoman tribes referred to, though they might generally inhabit

* Ibid., No. 22, p. 20.

territories which were Persian, were also in the habit of dwelling for a part of the year in territories which were Russian. He repeated, however, that although he gave these explanations, "it was not customary to interfere in the international relations of two independent States." To this Lord Augustus Loftus replied that the interests of the neighbouring States were more or less mixed up with those of our Indian Empire, and both Persia and Afghanistan might be considered as "limitrophe States to India." He added, "that the integrity of Persian territory had been the subject of a formal understanding and agreement between England and Russia in 1835 and 1838." M. de Westmann rejoined that this understanding had reference to the succession to the Persian throne, a subject on which he hoped the two Governments would always be able to come to a common understanding. But the incident now referred to by the British Ambassador was one affecting Persia alone, in which he could not admit the right of a third party to interfere. All this, however, was reported by our Ambassador as having been said in the most courteous and conciliatory manner.* Lord Derby replied to it by desiring Lord Augustus to point out to M. de Westmann that he was mistaken in saying that the agreement in 1835 and 1838 referred only to the succession to the Persian throne;† and on this representation being made, M. de Westmann at once said that he had not meant to deny the validity of that understanding at the present moment. He denied, however, that the in-

* Ibid., No. 23, pp. 21, 22. † Ibid., No. 24, p. 22.

tegrity of Persia had been menaced by General Llamakin's Circular any more than it had been menaced by the Seistan Arbitration—a matter which concerned Persian territory, but on which England had made no communication whatever to the Government of Russia.*

I have given this episode somewhat at length, because we shall see some reason to believe that the Proclamation of General Llamakin to the Turcoman Tribes "between the Attrek and the Goorgan" was one of the circumstances which started the Government on its new line of policy in India, and because it explains the condition of things down to the end of the year 1874—the last despatch of our Ambassador concerning it having been dated December 23rd in that year. It contains a record of transactions which prove that the Government at home had no need to call the attention of the Indian Viceroy to any part of the Central Asian question. Lord Northbrook and his Council had shown himself far more wakeful than either the Foreign or the Indian Secretary of State, and had exercised a vigilance in respect to the most distant frontiers of Persia, which did not appear in the despatches even of our Envoy at Teheran.

It was towards the end of these occurrences that an important event happened. Sir Bartle Frere wrote a Note. It was dated the 11th of January, 1875, and as it has since been published by the Government in the *Times* of November 14, 1878, in anticipation of the late session of Parliament, it cannot be doubted that it

* Ibid., No. 25, p. 23.

represents, to a considerable extent at least, the arguments which had weight with the Cabinet in the action which we are now about to trace. The Rawlinson Memorandum, written in a similar sense, which had been drawn up in 1868, had not, as we have seen, induced my predecessor, Sir Stafford Northcote, to change his course, —notwithstanding the then recent conquest of Bokhara, and the occupation of Samarkand. But the new Note by Sir Bartle Frere fell upon a mind at once more receptive and more impetuous, and it must be regarded as the beginning of all that followed. It had been preceded by a letter from the same distinguished member of the Indian Council, which was written in May, 1874, and was addressed to Sir J. Kaye, the Secretary of the Foreign Department in the India Office. This letter had recommended the occupation of Quetta, and the establishment of British officers at Herat, Balkh, and Candahar. In reply to this letter a Memorandum had been written by Lord Lawrence, dated November 4, 1874. The Note, therefore, by Sir Bartle Frere, dated January 11, 1875, is to be regarded in the light of, and has all the marks of being, a controversial reply to Lord Lawrence, and an elaborate defence of his own opinion. It is remarkable that none of these papers—to one of which the Government evidently attaches so much importance—were ever communicated to the Government of India. It is evident from the dates that the Note of Sir Bartle Frere cannot have been communicated even privately to the Viceroy before action was taken in the sense it recommended. This is not surprising. When Secretaries of State take

to acting under the inspiration of others, who are not in a responsible position, they do not always like the sources of that inspiration to be known.*

It is one of the advantages of the Indian Council that the members of it are generally men of very different views, who are accustomed to contest each other's opinions, sometimes with the utmost keenness, and very often with the most varied knowledge. Thus the Secretary of State may always hear every question of importance thoroughly sifted; whilst, on the other hand, it is never or very rarely safe to accept without careful examination either the facts or arguments which are put forward in such controversies by individual men. It has always been the favourite device of Parliamentary tacticians, when Indian questions happen to become the subject of party contention, to quote as conclusive on their side the opinions and arguments of some very able and distinguished man,—concealing altogether the fact that these opinions and arguments had been successfully traversed by others quite equal, or perhaps superior, in weight of metal. This was the method pursued, I recollect, a good many years ago, by the present Prime Minister, in a famous attack he made on the administration of the Marquis of Dalhousie.

Considering, then, the importance which evidently attaches to Sir Bartle Frere's Note of the 11th January,

* I have taken these facts concerning the Papers referred to principally from the explanatory paragraph in the *Times* of November 14th, 1878.

1875, not only on account of the eminent abilities and many accomplishments of its distinguished author, but also on account of the effect it seems to have produced, it may be well to indicate here some of the statements and arguments it contains.

The first characteristic which strikes me is the elaborate endeavour which this Note makes to establish a great distinction between the policy of Lord Lawrence and the policy of Lord Mayo in respect to Afghanistan. I have shown in the previous narrative that there was no such distinction. Lord Mayo always represented himself as having acted strictly on the lines of policy laid down by his predecessor. The Umballa Conference itself was in pursuance of that policy. All that was said and done there, and, moreover, all that Lord Mayo carefully avoided saying and doing, was strictly in pursuance of the same policy. The money and arms which Lord Mayo gave to the Ameer was either in implement or in supplement of the assistance which had been given or promised by Lord Lawrence. The assurances for the future were confined within the same general limits of principle which had been traced by Lord Lawrence. There is not the shadow of ground for establishing the distinction which Sir Bartle Frere endeavours to establish, still less for the contrast to which he points. Sir Bartle is quite mistaken when he says that "Shere Ali and all the Afghans are among those who have shared his opinion" in the matter. We have seen that Shere Ali rarely failed to couple the names of Lord Lawrence and of Lord Mayo together as those of two great and equal

friends. We have seen that in the very latest communication to the Government of India, when he was trembling under communications which he erroneously interpreted as indications of a change of policy, he not only made an earnest appeal to those joint names, but he singled out Lord Lawrence as his special benefactor, and as the Viceroy from whom he held a "Sunnud" of the highest value.

This mistake of Sir Bartle Frere is not accidental. It arises from a fundamental misapprehension of the principle of Lord Lawrence's policy, and from a kind of misapprehension concerning it which is one of the commonest fruits of political controversy. In order to combat our opponent's policy, we are very apt, first, to caricature it. Lord Lawrence's policy has been in this way absurdly caricatured. It never was a policy of absolute or unconditional abstention in Afghanistan. It was not this even in internal affairs; still less was it this in external relations. He began his assistance to Shere Ali before the civil war had been absolutely decided; and Sir Henry Rawlinson, as we have seen, has actually represented this as a departure by Lord Lawrence from his own policy. It was not so, as I have shown. It may have been a departure from the conception of that policy which had arisen in the minds of his opponents. But we must take Lord Lawrence's policy not from his opponents, but from himself. As regards the external relations of Afghanistan, it was a policy of abstention still more conditional. In the event of foreign interference in Afghanistan, Lord Lawrence not only never recommended

abstention, but we have seen that he emphatically recommended resolute and immediate action.

It was my duty as Secretary of State for India during a period of five years, to form as clear and definite a conception as I could of the policy which Lord Mayo always declared to be his own, and the conception of it, which I have here indicated, was that on which Lord Mayo acted, and was prepared to act.

The next observation which occurs to me on Sir Bartle Frere's Note is, that he discusses the principal measure he recommends—namely, the establishment of British officers in Afghanistan—without the slightest reference to the question whether it had or had not formed the subject of direct engagement with the Ameer, either by Treaties, or by the pledges and promises of Indian Viceroys. Not only does he omit all reference to this question, but he assumes on hearsay evidence, and, as I have shown, quite incorrectly, that the Ameer had expressed his willingness to receive such officers. He treats with ridicule, and even with indignation, one of the objections which Afghan Rulers have always put forward—namely, the difficulty of insuring the safety of such officers among a fanatical people. But, even supposing that this objection had been (what it certainly has not been) wholly ostensible, and only serving to cover the real ground of objection—namely, the fear entertained by the Ameer that he would soon cease to rule in his own Kingdom if British officers were permanently located there—Sir Bartle Frere does not deal satisfactorily with this fear. Indeed, by implication, he admits it to have much

foundation. One of the two things which he says we ought especially to keep in view as the main objects of our action, is to impress the Afghans with a conviction that we have no desire "to interfere with their independence and self-government." He admits that this will require "much self-control and abstinence from unnecessary interference on the part of our representatives." It will, indeed; and no man who considers the position of British officers in contact with such a condition of political society as that presented by Afghanistan, can reasonably deny that the traditional fears of the Rulers of Cabul on this subject have a reasonable foundation.

The occupation of Quetta is recommended, to prevent its falling into the hands of any other Power. But as there was then as little possibility of this as there is now, Sir Bartle Frere is obliged to argue it as part of a much larger plan—namely, that of our meeting Russia on the western frontiers of Afghanistan—a necessity which, indeed, no Anglo-Indian politician can exclude from his view as a possible contingency, but which, on the other hand, considering all the consequences it must involve, no wise man would willingly precipitate. This formidable proposal of "meeting Russia on the western frontier of Afghanistan" is the principle of the whole argument. It points to a course of conduct which could not be pursued without a breach of faith. But this is never mentioned It is a course which could not be pursued without military expenditure on the largest scale. Yet the Note gravely maintains that only when this course has been conducted

to its conclusion, can we hope for Peace Establishments in India. Propositions which seem so careless in respect to our Treaty obligations, and so rash and extravagant in respect to policy—are the basis of the Paper on which the new Policy was founded.

CHAPTER III.

FROM JANUARY, 1875, TO THE BEGINNING OF THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD LYTTON IN APRIL, 1876.

IT was only eleven days after the date of this Note—on the 22nd of January, 1875—that Lord Salisbury addressed his first despatch* to the Government of India, directing the Viceroy to take measures with as much expedition as the circumstances of the case permitted, for procuring the assent of the Ameer to the establishment of a British Agency at Herat. When this was accomplished, it might be desirable to take a similar step with regard to Candahar. With respect to Cabul itself, the Secretary of State did not suggest any similar step, as he "was sensible of the difficulties interposed by the fanatic violence of the people." The reasons for this instruction are calmly and temperately stated in the despatch, these reasons being principally connected with the acknowledged importance of having accurate information from the western frontiers of Afghanistan. It was admitted that "no immediate danger appeared to threaten the interests of her Majesty in the regions of Central Asia." But "the aspect of affairs was sufficiently grave to inspire solicitude, and to suggest the necessity of

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 31, p. 128.

timely precaution." The effect of the Llamakin Proclamation seems to be indicated in the opening sentence, which intimated that "Her Majesty's Government had followed with anxious attention the progress of events in Central Asia, and on the frontiers of Persia and Afghanistan."

There are two very remarkable circumstances to be observed about this despatch. The first is that, although written some eighteen months after Lord Northbrook's Conferences with the Envoy of Shere Ali, at Simla, it indicates no symptom whatever of the opinion that the Viceroy had on that occasion taken an impolitic course towards the Ameer, or had failed to give him anything that could have been safely offered. On the contrary, the whole object of the despatch is to endeavour to force upon the Ameer a proposal of which he was known to be extremely jealous, whilst it did not instruct Lord Northbrook, or even authorise him, to offer any concession whatever in return. If it were true that the Ameer was then sulky or estranged, this was not a very conciliatory, or even a just method of dealing with him. The only excuse for Lord Salisbury is to suppose that at that time it had not occurred to him that any conciliation of the Ameer was required, or that Lord Northbrook's course eighteen months before had given to Shere Ali any just cause of complaint. This circumstance is a sufficient comment on the candour and the fairness of the attempts lately made by the Government to ascribe to the policy of Lord Northbrook the results produced by the new policy inaugurated by themselves.

The next circumstance observable about this despatch is that, like Sir Bartle Frere's Note, it makes no allusion whatever to the engagements of the Indian Government with the Ameer on the subject of British officers resident in his dominions. This was excusable on the part of Sir Bartle Frere, who did not know all the facts. I venture to think it was a grave and culpable omission on the part of a Secretary of State for India, who ought to have known the engagements by which it was his duty to abide. Not only does the despatch make no allusion to Treaties or pledges on this subject, but it dwells on the loose private gossip which reported the Ameer as having been willing to admit an Agent at Herat; and it makes the still more serious assumption that, "if his intentions were still loyal, it was not possible that he would make any serious difficulty now."*

After the facts which I have narrated in the previous pages, it is needless to produce any farther proof that this despatch was written either in unaccountable forgetfulness, or in more unaccountable disregard, of the plighted faith of the Government of the Queen.

The only indication in the despatch that the Secretary of State at all bore in mind the honourable obligations in this matter under which we lay, is that he did instruct the Viceroy to procure the Ameer's consent. It may be well, therefore, to point out here what this really involved. It is, of course, true that it would be no breach of our engagement with the Ameer, to send British Agents to

* Ibid., p. 129, para. 6.

his country if it could be done with his free consent. But the whole essence of Lord Mayo's promise lay in the pledge that we were not to force that consent by the undue pressure which a powerful Government can put upon a weak one. In the case of two Powers perfectly equal making such an agreement between themselves, it might be always legitimate for either of them to try to persuade the other to abandon the agreement, and to make some other arrangement in its stead. Nor do I deny that it might be perfectly legitimate for the Government of India to sound the disposition of the Ameer from time to time, and to try by gentle means to ascertain whether he could not be persuaded, freely and willingly, to let us off from the promises we had made. This had just been done by Lord Northbrook when he proposed to send an officer to examine the frontier, and to seek an interview with the Ameer at Cabul. The result was to prove that Shere Ali retained all his dread and all his suspicion of the consequences of any change. It was for the very purpose of leaving the Ameer in perfect freedom to act upon his feelings and opinions in this matter—to make him feel comfortable in regard to it—that Lord Mayo had given him the pledge at Umballa. No such freedom could be left to him if the powerful Government of India were to press him unduly to yield upon the subject. The application of such pressure was, therefore, in itself a departure from the understanding; and to visit a refusal on the part of the Ameer with resentment or with penal consequences of any kind, was the distinct violation of a promise, and a direct breach of faith.

The other circumstance connected with this despatch which deserves notice is the curious Departmental jealousy which the second paragraph incidentally displays of the Foreign Office. After noticing the scantiness of the information which it was in the power of the Viceroy to supply, the paragraph in question proceeds thus :—" For knowledge of what passes in Afghanistan, and upon its frontiers, they (her Majesty's advisers) are compelled to rely mainly upon the indirect intelligence which reaches them through the Foreign Office."

This passage is connected with a very important part of the whole subject, which has not been sufficiently attended to. The observation of Lord Salisbury seems to have been immediately suggested by the circumstance which has been just narrated, namely, that the information in respect to General Llamakin's proclamation to the Turkomans, and his reported movements on the Attrek, had come from our Mission at Teheran, reporting, as that Mission does, not to the India Office, but to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.* It has, however, been a favourite doctrine at the India Office, that the Persian Mission ought to be now, as it once was, in direct communication with that Office—that it ought to represent the Government of India, and be officered and directed from Calcutta. An emphatic recommendation that we should return to this arrangement was a prominent feature of the advice urged upon the Government in 1868 in the

* I believe that, strictly speaking, the Persian Mission reports both to the Home Government and to the Government of India, duplicate despatches being sent to Calcutta.

Rawlinson Memorandum of that year. During the time I was at the India Office I have heard the question frequently discussed, and although there are undoubtedly some arguments in favour of the Departmental view, I never could agree with my colleagues who supported it. Teheran is the Capital where Indian and European politics meet. But the centre of interest is European. Even as regards Indian questions, the methods of operating upon them in Persia are essentially connected with the main currents of European diplomacy. I am informed by my relative, Sir John McNeill, who for many years occupied with distinguished ability the post of British Envoy in Persia, that in the disastrous year of the first Afghan war, he felt very strongly that he never could have maintained the influence of England against Russia, if he had been in the position at Teheran of representing merely the Indian Government, and of not directly representing the Queen. It is, of course, true that the Government of India is, and always has been in political matters, the Government of the Queen. But the question depends not on what we know to be the fact, but on what foreign Governments understand to be the fact. There can be no doubt on this—that at any Court, but especially at such a Court as that of Persia, the British Representative would lose in authority and in influence if he were not understood to be the direct representative of the British Sovereign.

This, however, is only part of the question which is suggested rather than raised by the paragraph in Lord Salisbury's despatch of the 22nd of January, 1875, in

which he refers to the "indirectness" of the information coming through the Foreign Office. That passage does not necessarily indicate any opinion on the constitution of the Persian Mission adverse to that which I have now expressed. But it does indicate an opinion on the importance and value of the information upon Central Asian politics which is to be derived through our intercourse with Persia, which has a direct and a very important bearing on the new policy which was about to be pursued towards the unfortunate Ameer. Although I do not agree with Sir Henry Rawlinson that the Persian Mission should represent directly the Government of India, I do most thoroughly agree with him that it ought to be, and that, geographically, it is specially fitted to be, the main source of our information on that branch of Central Asian politics which excites most alarm in the Anglo-Indian mind. The point on which that mind is fixed with special anxiety is Merve, and the affection which the very mention of that word produces is so peculiar, that it almost deserves a special name, and may be called "Mervousness." Now, what is Merve, and where is it? It is a wretched village, or, at the best, a very small and poor town of Turkoman mud huts, undefended, or, if not wholly so, at least defended only by mud walls. It is a nest of robbers. This seems to be admitted on all hands, and the principal circumstance which gives rise to any anxiety about it is, that its inhabitants are always plundering some Russian caravan, or kidnapping some Russian subjects. Geographically, its importance is represented to be that it is not in a desert,

but in a tract of country well watered, and more or less cultivated; and that the country intervening between it and Herat, the frontier province of Afghanistan, is of a similar character. The argument is that, if Russia were once established in Merve, there would be no physical impediment to the march of an army upon Herat. It is one thing, however, for Russia to send a force capable of taking Merve, and a very different thing for Russia either to collect at Merve, or to march from Merve, a force capable of taking Herat—which is a place defended by the strongest walls of earthwork which exist anywhere in the world. Sir Henry Rawlinson describes them as "stupendous." It is stated on the same high authority that even Merve, if it were defended by a concentration of the Turkoman tribes, could not safely be attacked by a smaller force than 20,000 men; whilst an assault on Herat would require not less than 40,000.* Putting aside, however, all these considerations, which, after all, can only abate our "Mervousness" a little, the point on which I wish to dwell now is, that Merve is within about fifty miles of the Persian frontier, and not more than about 150 miles from the Persian City of Meshed, at which we have an Agent of our Persian Mission. Meshed is much nearer to Herat than Merve, and an active British Agency at that important Persian town would command the earliest and most complete information on every possible Russian movement even upon Merve, and still more easily upon every preparation made there for a

* *Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1879, p. 255.

further movement upon Herat. Most of the information forwarded by our Envoy at Teheran on the subject of movements in Central Asia has been information procured by our Agent at Meshed. The whole line of advance which is feared on the part of Russia, from the Caspian up the valley of the Attrek river, and beyond it in the direction of Merve, is a line of advance parallel with the Persian frontier, along the whole length of the province of Khorassan. It is in the country of tribes which have more or less direct relations with the Persian Government. This was the reason, and an excellent reason it is, why the information touching General Llamakin's proceedings, which aroused Lord Northbrook, but did not arouse Lord Salisbury till the Viceroy had shaken him on the subject, was information procured from our Envoy at Teheran. Sir Henry Rawlinson, in his article in the *Nineteenth Century* for December, 1878, has informed us that a Russian expedition of any formidable strength, attempting to approach the western frontiers of Afghanistan along this line of country, would be dependent for the enormous amount of carriage requisite for the purpose, upon Persian sources of supply. We have it, therefore, as a certainty arising out of geographical facts, and admitted by the highest authority, that the danger of such a proceeding on the part of Russia is a danger in respect to which we ought always to receive the earliest information from an efficient British Agency in Persia. Such an Agency ought to get, and certainly would get, information of Russian preparations on the Caspian, and of Russian movements from that

region, long before any such information could reach a British officer stationed in Herat. Indeed, it is most probable that the rumours reaching an officer in that city would be altogether unworthy of trust, or could only be verified by careful inquiry through our Agents in Persia.

The result of these considerations is to show that, whilst Lord Salisbury was now beginning to urge upon the Viceroy a course towards the Ameer which involved a breach of Treaty engagements, and a breach of Lord Mayo's solemn promises, and whilst he was doing so for the sake of a comparatively small advantage, he was, at the same time, overlooking, or treating in the spirit of mere departmental jealousy, another course not connected with any difficulty, or involving any risks, by which the same objects could be, and were actually being, much more effectually obtained. A well-organised system of intelligence in respect to events in Central Asia, in connexion with our Missions and Agencies in Persia, would enable us to watch every movement of Russia in the direction of Merve, and would be exposed to none of the dangers and objections attending a breach of Lord Mayo's engagements to the Ameer.

There is yet another circumstance connected with this despatch of the 22nd of January, 1875, on which it is necessary to observe. As a justification of the new policy about to be pursued, it became a great object with the Indian Secretary to make out that our native Agency at Cabul was nearly useless. Accordingly, in this first despatch, and in others that follow, we have this point much laboured, and, as usual, the evidence of the Indian

Government on the subject not very fairly quoted. Our native Agent at Cabul was Nawab Atta Mohammed Khan, a Mahomedan gentleman "of rank and character," appointed by Lord Lawrence in 1867, as one in "whose fidelity and discretion" he had "full confidence."* We have seen that this Agent, or his Moonshee, had been admitted to hear discussions in the Durbar of Shere Ali, and had repeatedly conveyed the most valuable and authentic accounts of the feelings and dispositions of the Cabul Government. But it now suited the policy of the Government, and was, indeed, a necessary part of it, to disparage this Agency as compared with that which it was desired to establish. The truth on this matter is not very far to seek. There are certain purposes for which a native Agent, however faithful, is of no use. If it is authority that we wish to exercise, we can only do it through a British officer. Even if it be the commanding influence which is tantamount to authority that we wish to have, we can only have it by employing a European officer. In short, if we want to domineer, we must have an Agent of our own race. And it is precisely for this reason that the Rulers of Cabul have always objected to such an Agent. But, on the other hand, if we want simply to gain information through an Agent who is at once faithful to us, and at the same time in sympathy with the Court to which he is sent, then a Mahomedan gentleman, such as Atta Mohammed, is not only as good as, but better than, a European. It is inconceivable that

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, p. 14.

a British officer would ever be allowed to be present at Durbars as our native Agent seems to have been. The evidence is, indeed, conclusive that Atta Mohammed has reported to us the truth, with just that degree of sympathy with the Court to which he was accredited which, if we were sincere, it was most desirable that he should possess.

The despatch of the 22nd Jan., 1875, seems to have given infinite trouble to the Government of India. There was no difficulty in answering it, but very great difficulty in answering it with that respect which is due to official superiors. It would have been easy to point out that it made no reference whatever to Treaties and pledges which the Government of India was bound to respect,—that it alleged certain things to have been said by the Ameer which, even if they had been said, had nothing to do with the agreement ultimately arrived at,—that it made this allegation on evidence which was not quoted, whilst authentic records were left unnoticed,—that it made the unjust and very unreasonable assumption that, if the Ameer desired to claim the protection of Lord Mayo's promises, he could not possibly be loyal in his intentions to Lord Mayo's successors in office,—all this it would have been easy to point out. But, in the meantime, what seemed to be a positive order must be either obeyed or disobeyed. Under these circumstances, Lord Northbrook telegraphed to the Secretary of State on the 18th of February that, in the judgment of the Government of India, it was inexpedient to take the initiative at that time in the matter referred to—that nothing was

traceable in the records at Calcutta showing that the Ameer had ever expressed his readiness to receive a British Agent at Herat, and that he might object to such an arrangement without being at all disloyal in his intentions towards the British Government. Lord Northbrook, therefore, asked whether Lord Salisbury's direction was peremptory, or whether a discretion was intended to be left to the Government of India.* On the 23rd of February, 1875, Lord Salisbury replied that a delay of three or four months would be within the discretion contemplated by her Majesty's Government, and the Viceroy was referred to three officers in India for the truth of the reports as to what the Ameer had been heard to say. They were now scattered in different parts of India and beyond it—one of them, Mr. Girdlestone being Resident in Nepal. The other two were Sir Richard Pollock, Commissioner of Peshawur, and Mr. Thornton, Secretary to the Governor of the Punjaub. But, strange to say, Lord Salisbury does not seem to have made any inquiry of Mr. Seton Karr, who was then in England, and who, as Foreign Secretary to the Government of India under Lord Mayo, was of all men most competent to give trustworthy evidence on the subject. His evidence has been given since, under a sense of what he owed "to truth," and to the memory of the Viceroy under whom he served in 1869. It is characteristic of the spirit in which the matter has been pursued, that, on account of this evidence, he was censured by an Under-Secretary

* Ibid., No. 32, para. 4, p. 129.

of State in the late debates in the House of Commons, and was represented by that official as having been too imperfectly acquainted with the Native languages to be accurately informed. Mr. Seton Karr has had no difficulty in exposing this attempt to suppress or damage truthful but unwelcome testimony.

The information on which Lord Salisbury was acting was not confirmed even by the officers to whom he expressly referred.

That information mainly rested on a note written by Mr. Girdlestone on the 26th of March, 1869, purporting to report what he had heard "in conversation with Punjaub officials." But on being asked by Lord Northbrook to give some more definite information as to the sources of his impression, that officer very frankly confessed that he had really none to give. Mr. Girdlestone did not hear the Ameer say one word upon the subject. His memory even failed to recall with certainty the authority from which he had derived an impression that Shere Ali had expressed himself to the effect supposed. His recollection, however, was that the information given to him had come "either from Major Pollock or Mr. Thornton." The "only other Punjaub official" whom he could specify was Colonel Reynell Taylor, who was Commissioner of Umballa in 1869.*

Let us now see what was said by the other two officers named by Lord Salisbury.

As regarded the present time, Sir R. Pollock was con-

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 2, 3, p. 136.

vinced that the Ameer would not willingly consent to receive British officers as Residents in his Kingdom ; and that "as regarded the past, it was well known to Government that the strongest objection has hitherto existed" to any such arrangement.*

Mr. Thornton said that he was not himself at any of the Conferences between Lord Mayo and the Ameer in 1869, and could not consequently speak from personal knowledge of what passed on those occasions. Of Shere Ali's feelings at the present time Mr. Thornton had no doubt. He believed the deputation of European officers into Afghanistan to be highly distasteful to the Ameer and his Councillors. As regarded the past, he could give no other evidence than that of a certain mysterious personage, designated as "X. Y.," who is explained to have been an Afghan, and who, in the secret records of the "Persian Office," was said to have reported the substance of certain conversations of the Ameer, not at Umballa, but before the Conferences, when he was at Cabul and at Lahore. What makes this mysterious "X. Y." still more mysterious is that he undertook to report private discussions which are expressly stated to have been held between the Ameer and his Minister, Noor Mohammed, "at which no third person was present."† This is one of the great privileges of the writers of fiction. Whether it be of ministers in the most secret conclave, or of conspirators in the darkest den, or only of lovers

* Ibid., Inclos. 5, p. 137.
† Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 11, p. 143.

"Sitting in a pleasant shade,
Which a grove of myrtles made,"

novelists have an equal privilege of reporting all that is said. And, stranger still, such is the power of their craft, that it never occurs to any of us to be surprised by the superhuman knowledge they display. It is, however, somewhat new to find grave Secretaries of State opening their ears to this kind of fiction, and preferring it to the evidence both of written documents and of men telling us what they knew. Of this more authentic kind of evidence Lord Northbrook's inquiries elicited abundance. For example, General Taylor, ~~Secretary to the Government of the Punjaub~~, an officer who had exceptional means of information, not only reported his own opinion that the Ameer would not be willing to consent to the proposed measure, and that for many reasons it would not be just to blame him,—but as regarded the past, he reported it to be well known that the Ameer and his advisers had more than once embodied their feelings and their opinions on the subject in the very strong expression, "Do anything but force British officers on us."*

The result, then, of Lord Northbrook's inquiries was to leave nothing whatever in support of the gossip on which Lord Salisbury had proceeded, except the Note and the private Memorandum Book of Captain Grey, the value of which has been already analysed in a previous page.

Having ascertained all this, having gathered the nearly

---

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 6, p. 139.

unanimous opinion of all its ablest and most experienced officers on the frontier, and having duly considered and re-considered the formal obligations under which it lay, the Government of India, on the 7th of June, 1875, addressed to the Government at home a despatch setting forth in detail all the arguments upon which it had come to the decided opinion, that there was no evidence of the alleged former willingness of the Ameer to receive European officers, sufficient to justify them in founding upon it any new representation on the subject; and that on all other grounds it would not be wise or politic to make the proposal. Lord Northbrook and the Council denied that the reluctance of the Ameer to accept it could be fairly interpreted as indicative of disloyal intentions against the British Government. They referred to the fact that without the same special reasons and historical causes the same feeling had always been expressed by the Ruler of Cashmere. They explained that Sir Richard Pollock, who was intimately acquainted with Noor Mohammed, and had confidential information on the real sentiments of the Ameer, was convinced that Shere Ali had no inclination whatever to look for help elsewhere than to the British Government. They pointed out that, though he had been displeased at not having got all he wanted in 1873, he had nevertheless acted on our advice, although most reluctantly, in accepting the Seistan Arbitration. They recalled to the mind of the Secretary of State the recorded and specific assurances given to the Ameer by Lord Mayo at Umballa; they suggested that a change of policy on our part in this matter might throw

Afghanistan into the arms of Russia on the first favourable opportunity. They admitted that the presence of a British Agent at Herat would be in itself desirable and they emphatically explained that if the threatened movement of Russia upon Merve did actually take place, or even if Russia assumed authority over the whole Turkoman country, they would then deem it necessary to make some new arrangement, and to give additional and more specific assurances to the Ruler of Afghanistan against attack from without; they indicated their opinion that this new arrangement should probably take the form of a new Treaty, and that then the establishment of a British officer at Herat might naturally be brought about. In the meantime, they recommended a steady adherence to the patient and conciliatory policy which had been pursued for many years towards Afghanistan, and that every reasonable allowance should be made for the difficulties of the Ameer.*

The Government at home did not reply to this despatch until the 19th of November, 1875. By this time the Eastern Question had risen above the horizon in its European aspects. The insurrection had begun in Bosnia and the Herzegovina in the month of July.† On the 18th of August a dim vision of the "Three Emperors" had appeared in the common action of their Ambassadors at Constantinople. They were actually seen consulting together for the purpose of interfering with Turkey, and of sending out the Consular

* Ibid., No. 32, p. 129–135.

† See "The Eastern Question," Vol. I. p. 131.

Mission.* On the 24th of August the Cabinet had been dragged by the force of circumstances, but most reluctantly, to join in this first step taken by the other Powers of Europe. In October it had become apparent that the insurrection was of a most serious character—that the Porte was greatly alarmed—that it was making profuse explanations and promises of reform—that these were being received with contempt by the insurgents, and by incredulity on the part of every Cabinet except that of London. In November it became known that Austria-Hungary was moving forward in the direction of intervention or of interference of some kind, and was in consultation with the Governments of Germany and of Russia. The jealousy and suspicion of the English Ministry had been aroused, and at the very time when Lord Salisbury was preparing his rejoinder to Lord Northbrook, his colleague at the Foreign Office was inditing the first despatch which intimated to our Ambassador at Vienna that the "gravity of the political situation had been undoubtedly aggravated" by the rumours that Austria-Hungary was concerting "some scheme in regard to the Herzegovina without consultation with the Powers, parties to the Treaty of 1856."† The despatch of Lord Derby was dated November 20th, that of Lord Salisbury was dated November 19th. Written in all probability without any direct connexion, they were nevertheless contemporary events, and are alike illustrations of the atmosphere of opinion prevalent at the time.

---

* Ibid., p. 136. † Ibid., p. 157.

To this atmosphere various breezes had contributed. As in 1874 Sir Bartle Frere had written a Note, so in 1875 Sir Henry Rawlinson had published a book—"England and Russia in the East." In this very interesting and important work, full of local knowledge, and marked by great powers of systematic statement, everything which had hitherto been said in private memoranda for official information, was published to the world. Coinciding with a time when the public mind was beginning to be excited against Russia on other grounds, it could not fail to have a considerable effect. And yet, like every other work full of solid information and of real ability, it ought not to have been without its calming influence if it had been studied and interpreted with care. Although representing Russia as a Power engaged in the attack of a fortress—which fortress was India—and advancing by "parallels" to the attack across the whole length and breadth of Central Asia from Orenburg to the Upper Oxus, it nevertheless set forth very fully not only the immense spaces she had yet to traverse, but the still more immense political and military preparations which she had yet to make. Especially in regard to the "parallel" which started from the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, and was directed towards Herat, it showed how closely connected it was with the Persian frontier, and how any advance upon that line must depend much on securing the goodwill and co-operation of the Persian Government.* So close was this connexion that the

* Second Edition, p. 294.

possible ultimate contingency was described to be—that Russia might, after having first taken Herat, launch from that base upon India a force of 50,000 men of Persian "Sirbaz," disciplined and commanded by Russian officers. Men disposed to be in a panic are neither able nor willing to estimate with any care either the time required or the number of steps to be taken before such a contingency as this could be brought about. The Government, in particular, never seem to have bestowed a thought upon the just importance which Sir Henry Rawlinson set upon the Persian Mission as the agency through which all possible Russian movements in that direction can be most effectually watched, and without the knowledge of which, if it is well organised, it is impossible that any movement towards the capture of such a place as Herat could be made without months, or perhaps even years of warning.*

The entire neglect of all modifying considerations of this kind is conspicuous in the Despatch of the 19th of November, 1875. The consequence was, that treating, as we have seen, all Foreign Office information as "indirect" and comparatively valueless to India, Lord Salisbury had come to attach a most exaggerated value to the establishment of a British Agency at Herat. Every conceivable cause of trouble was conjured up in

† The Article in the *Quarterly Review* for January, 1879, before referred to, sets forth even more distinctly than Sir Henry Rawlinson had previously done, the dependence upon Persian complicity and support, of any Russian advance upon Herat from the Caspian base.

support of the proposal to press on the Ameer his consent to the reception of a British officer there. The objection to it as a breach of engagement with him, and as highly offensive to him, and the danger of it as liable to throw him into the hands of Russia, are treated with silence or with contempt. The importance of it was argued in connexion with the fear that Russia might acquire by intrigue a dominant influence over the Ameer—with the fear that civil disturbances might arise and lead to the same result —with the fear that the Ameer himself might offend Russia by military expeditions on his frontier—with the fear, above all, of the permanent occupation by Russia of Merve. The Government of India had treated that occupation as a contingency which, if not necessarily distant, could not arise without warning, and which, if it did arise, must yet leave ample time for the British Government to take measures against any possible movement upon Herat. Lord Salisbury, on the contrary, treated it as if it might happen at any moment, and as if, when it did happen, the "time might have passed by when representations to the Ameer could be made with any useful result." Shere Ali already knew that Samarkand was Russian, and that Bokhara was under Russia, so that he had Russia on his very borders. But if the mud village of Merve were ever to be occupied by the Russians, although it was 100 miles at least from his most distant frontier, then, indeed, he would conclude "that no Power exists which is able to stop their progress." Such is the fever-heat that had been attained under the influence of that condition of mind to which,

as being something quite peculiar, and different from anything else, I have ventured to apply the word "Mervousness."

Accordingly, under the influence of these feelings, the Secretary of State, in his Despatch of the 19th of November, 1875, still insisted on his previous instructions, that measures should be taken to procure the assent of the Ameer to a British Mission at Herat. What these measures were to be, I think it safest to describe in the language of the Despatch itself :—

"The first step, therefore, in establishing our relations with the Ameer upon a more satisfactory footing, will be to induce him to receive a temporary Embassy in his capital. It need not be publicly connected with the establishment of a permanent Mission within his dominions There would be many advantages in ostensibly directing it to some object of smaller political interest, which it will not be difficult for your Excellency to find, or, if need be, to create."*

The Viceroy was, therefore, instructed to find some occasion for sending a Mission to Cabul, and to "press the reception of this Mission very earnestly upon the Ameer." The Envoy was not directed to make any definite offers to the Ameer—any new Treaty—any new dynastic guarantee—or any one of the things which the Ameer had desired. The only reward to be given him for agreeing to sacrifice the surviving Article of the Treaty of 1857 and the pledges of Lord Mayo, was an assurance

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 33, para. 15, p. 149.

"of the earnest desire of Her Majesty's Government that his territories should remain safe from external attack." But as this assurance had been given to him over and over again, and with special emphasis and formality by Lord Northbrook, at Simla, in 1873,—as, moreover, he knew it to be true, because it was an assurance founded on our own interests,—this despatch did, in fact, demand of the Ameer to give up that which he valued above all the other boons he had received from former Viceroys, and offered him nothing whatever that was new in return. But more than this—it directed that the new demand should be made upon him, not as a friendly request if he should be really willing to grant it, but under threats. The Envoy was, indeed, to maintain a friendly "tone." But these significant words were added: "It will be the Envoy's duty earnestly to press upon the Ameer the risk he would run if he should impede the course of action which the British Government think necessary for securing his independence."*

The Government of India is a subordinate Government, and owes ultimate obedience to the responsible advisers of the Crown. But from the traditions of its history, and from the necessities of its position, its subordination is qualified by a large and a well-understood measure of independence. There were some things in this despatch which that Government could not be made the instrument of doing without remonstrance. In the first place, they objected to the practice of dissimulation towards the

* Ibid., No. 33, pp. 147–9.

Ruler of Afghanistan. They objected to make upon him some demand which was to be only "ostensible," with the view of keeping back the real object we desired to gain. They wished to be allowed to speak the truth. In the second place, they thought that if the thing were to be done at all, something more definite should be offered to the Ameer than the mere repetition of assurances already given, and which he well knew to be securely founded on a just estimate of our own political interests. They thought that the Viceroy should inform the Ameer that the "condition of affairs in Central Asia made it expedient that the relations between the British Government and Afghanistan should be placed on a more definite footing than at present."

Holding these views, Lord Northbrook and his Council determined that they could not act on the instructions conveyed by the Despatch of November 19, 1875, without another reference to the Government at home, and another full representation of their unaltered opinion on the impolicy of the whole proceeding. This accordingly they did in a Despatch dated the 28th of January, 1876. They had to deal delicately and yet firmly with the suggestion that the Viceroy of India should begin a negotiation with the Ameer by an attempt to cajole and to deceive him. I think it will be acknowledged that they did so deal with it in the following passage:—"The result of our deliberations is that we are convinced that if a Mission is to be sent to Cabul, the most advisable course would be to state frankly and fully to the Ameer the real purpose of the Mission." Lord Northbrook also

took occasion, once more, and more decidedly than ever, to remind the Secretary of State that the proposal was "a departure from the understanding arrived at between Lord Mayo and the Ameer at the Umballa Conferences of 1869." He declared that he was in possession of no information which led him to believe that the Russian Government had any intention or desire to interfere with the independence of Afghanistan. He pointed out that the Ameer up to the very latest date, September, 1875, had continued to act on the policy recommended to him by the British Government, and had prevented his people from showing sympathy with a rising in Kokhand against Russian authority. Finally, the Government of India declared that they continued to "deprecate, as involving serious danger to the peace of Afghanistan and to the interests of the British Empire in India, the execution, under present circumstances, of the instructions conveyed" in the Despatch of November, 1875.*

As Lord Northbrook had now resigned, and as the Government had the prospect of appointing a Viceroy after their own heart, this resolute resistance of the Government of India was suffered to stay proceedings for a time.

The instructions to the new Viceroy were signed on the 28th of February, 1876.† It will be observed that the date of this Despatch is just one month after the Cabinet had been reluctantly compelled to join in the Andrassy Note.‡ Whatever fears and jealousy of Russia

* Ibid., No. 34, pp. 149–155.
† Ibid., No. 35, Inclos., pp. 156-9.
‡ See "The Eastern Question," Vol. I., p. 164.

had been long affecting the minds of the Government were not likely at that moment to be working with abated force. Accordingly, in its very first paragraph, the Despatch set forth that the "increasing weakness and uncertainty of British influence in Afghanistan constitutes a prospective peril to British interests." This was at least quite honest. There is no attempt here to pretend that the new policy was animated by a disinterested anxiety for the welfare of the Ameer. In his former Despatches, as we have seen, Lord Salisbury had not even pretended to offer him any compensation.

But Lord Northbrook's parting remonstrances had effected something. The new instructions adopted his suggestion, that an endeavour should be made to offer to the Ameer something in return for the sacrifice we were demanding of him, and that he should be invited to enter into a larger and more definite arrangement than had heretofore existed. So far the Government had profited by the remonstrances of Lord Northbrook and his Council. Their instructions to him had contemplated no such course, and had enjoined upon him nothing but to make an "ostensible" demand upon the Ameer which was to cover another demand still more obnoxious.

But when we come to examine closely the method in which the new Despatch worked out the suggestion of Lord Northbrook, that if this unjust and inexpedient demand were to be made at all, it should be accompanied by some other proposals of a more soothing character, we find nothing but a series of ambiguities, with a strong under-current of the former tendency to

deception. I do not deny that many of these ambiguities arise out of the insuperable difficulty attending the policy to be pursued. The centre of that difficulty lay in this—that the only things which the Ameer really cared to get, were things which no British Government could possibly give him, whilst, on the other hand, the only things which we could give him, were things which he knew we must give him from motives of our own. How Lord Northbrook would have overcome this difficulty, if he had continued to be Viceroy, it is needless to speculate because the policy was one of which he disapproved,—on account, partly, of those very difficulties which were inseparable from it. But one thing was clearly indicated in his last Despatch—namely, this, that everything would have been explained to the Ameer with perfect openness, in a friendly spirit, and without aggravating the injustice of violated Treaties and broken promises, by the still greater injustice of menaces and threats.

Let us now see how these difficulties were met by the instructions to the new Viceroy. On the subject of the compensating advantages which might be offered to the Ameer in return for the new demands which were to be made upon him, we shall find that the one great object kept in view by the Secretary of State, was—to offer as little as possible in reality, and as much as possible in appearance.

The first thing which the Ameer was well known to desire was a fixed annual subsidy of considerable amount. Even with this question the Despatch shows a disposition to fence. It was one of "secondary magnitude." But

on the whole the Secretary of State points to an adverse decision, and tells the new Viceroy that he "would probably deem it inexpedient to commit his Government to any permanent pecuniary obligation" (par. 13). The same liberty, however, which had been given by former Cabinets to Lord Lawrence and to Lord Mayo, was given to Lord Lytton, as to occasional subsidies, to be granted to the Ameer, at discretion, and from time to time.

Next comes the dynastic guarantee—one of the greatest objects of Shere Ali's desire—that the British Government should commit itself to him and to his family, and should promise to support by arms whatever nomination to the succession might be determined by the influence of some favourite inmate of his harem.

With this question Lord Salisbury fences still more obviously. The paragraphs dealing with it (pars. 14, 15, 16)* remind one of the action of a heavy fish rising shyly at a fly, not touching it with its mouth, but giving it a flap with its tail. The Secretary of State refers to the passage of Lord Mayo's letter in 1869 which had been the subject of correspondence between that Viceroy and myself, and respecting the sense of which we had arrived at a clear and definite understanding. He styles that passage a "solemn and deliberate declaration;" and in the next paragraph he calls it an "ambiguous formula." He says that former Governments had not based upon that declaration any "positive measures." He says that,

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 35, p. 158.

having been given "under circumstances of some solemnity and parade, it appears to have conveyed (to the Ameer) a pledge of definite action in his favour." He does not venture to affirm directly that Lord Mayo had bound himself to support by arms any succession that Shere Ali might determine to appoint. But he implies it—in the teeth of Lord Mayo's published explanation, that he had specially warned the Ameer that, under no circumstances, should a British soldier cross the frontiers of India in support of any such course.

Having got so far in misrepresenting what had been already done, the Government at last approach the point where it becomes necessary to say something as to what they themselves were prepared to do. But, again, they come up to that point only to go round about it. "Her Majesty's Government do not desire to renounce their traditional policy of abstention from all *unnecessary* interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan."* The stress here is on the word "unnecessary." Had it become necessary to pledge the British Government to support a nomination virtually made by the mother of Abdoolah Jan? Surely it was possible to say Yes or No to that question. But neither Yes nor No is definitely spoken. Refuge is taken in the "ambiguous formula" of an abstract proposition. It is an ambiguous formula, however, which has a very obvious purpose. "But," says the Despatch, "the frank recognition of a *de facto* order in the succession established by a *de facto*

* Ibid., para. 16, p. 158.

Government to the throne of a Foreign State does not, in their opinion, imply or necessitate any intervention in the internal affairs of that State."

The ingenuity of this passage is great. It enabled Lord Lytton to give to Shere Ali an "ostensible" dynastic guarantee, without giving him the reality. He might recognise the order of succession established in favour of Abdoolah Jan simply as a fact,—just as Shere Ali's own actual occupation of the throne had been acknowledged as a fact. But this acknowledgment need not imply, and ought not to imply, any pledge whatever to support it by force of arms if ever it came to be contested. Thus Shere Ali might be allowed to get the appearance of that which he desired, without the substance.

Having laid this trap for the unfortunate Ameer, and laid it, I must say, with incomparable ingenuity and skill, the Government proceeds to deal with the remaining difficulties of the case precisely in the same spirit. The next thing which the Ameer desired was some guarantee against foreign aggression, which should be practically unconditional—a guarantee which should place the resources of England and of India, in money, in men, and in arms, at his disposal, without any troublesome restrictions or control. The Government were in possession of very recent information that such was really the aim of Shere Ali. The only part of the Secret Note of that mysterious individual, "X. Y.," on which any reliance can be placed—because the only part of it which is corroborated by other evidence—is that part in

which "X. Y." describes what Noor Mohammed told his master it would be desirable and practicable to obtain. It was this :—"That the money and arms be given by the British Government ; the men composing the troops should be provided by us, and the power and management should rest with ourselves."* How was this state of things to be dealt with in the new instructions ? Let us see.

The first thing to be done, as in the former case, was to put a suitable gloss upon what had been done by former Viceroys,—that the contrast with what was to be done now might be the more imposing. In the case of Abdoolah Jan, this gloss had to be put upon the doings of Lord Mayo. It had now to be put upon the doings of Lord Northbrook. Not much consideration was due to him. He had thwarted the designs of the Government, and he had been compelled to do so in terms which, however respectful, involved reproach. It was all the more natural to discover now, although it had not been discovered before, that there had been something seriously wrong in his proceedings at Simla in 1873. The Government had been in office for two years, and had never hinted this opinion to the Government of India ; but an occasion had arisen when the expression of it became convenient. Accordingly (in pars. 21, 22), we have the intimation that the assurance given by Lord Northbrook to the Ameer in 1873 was only a "personal assurance." This is the first hint of a distinction between

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 11, p. 143.

the promise of a Viceroy and a pledge binding on the Government, of which we shall find great use made in the sequel. In this place it is of no other use than to prepare the way for a disparagement of the proceedings at Simla, which had become necessary for the purposes of the Despatch. That disparagement is proceeded with in the next paragraph (22). Lord Northbrook's declaration is described as just "sufficient to justify reproaches on the part of Shere Ali if, in the contingency to which it referred, he should be left unsupported by the British Government," and yet as "unfortunately too ambiguous to secure confidence or inspire gratitude on the part of his Highness." The suggestion is then made that on account of this conduct of Lord Northbrook the Ameer had "remained under a resentful impression that his Envoy had been trifled with." If, therefore, Shere Ali were to be frank with Lord Lytton's Envoy, he could probably renew the demand addressed to Lord Northbrook in 1873, "that in the event of any aggression on the Ameer's territories the British Government should distinctly state that it regards the aggressor as its enemy; and, secondly, that the contingency of an aggression by Russia should be specifically mentioned in the written assurance to be given to the Ameer."*

Here, then, was a suggested demand on the part of the Ameer, which, though by no means expressed in a very extreme form, did indicate a guarantee without definite conditions, and tending to compromise the free-

* Ibid., p. 159.

dom of the British Government. It would have been easy to tell Lord Lytton at once, and without circumlocution, whether he was to comply with it or not. But again, we have a very "shy rise," and a sheer-off into the safe obscurity of a foam of words. In the first place, it is explained that the answer must not be made identical "in terms" with the answer of Lord Northbrook. That would be only to prejudice instead of to improve our relations with the Ameer, "by the evasion of an invited confidence."* But then follows a passage which implies that, although the terms were not to be identical, the substance was to be the same. It had been Lord Northbrook's object to keep the freedom of the British Government, and not to let the Ameer have a guarantee without conditions. Again, it would have been easy to say, frankly and openly, whether the Government did or did not mean to keep this freedom. But, again, they evade the point by the following carefully-balanced ambiguities (par. 24) :—" Her Majesty's Government are therefore prepared to sanction and support any more definite declaration which may, in your judgment, secure to their unaltered policy the advantages of which it has been hitherto deprived by an apparent doubt of its sincerity. But they must reserve to themselves entire freedom of judgment as to the character of circumstances involving the obligation of material support to the Ameer, and it must be distinctly understood that only in the case of unprovoked aggression would such an obligation arise."

---

* Ibid., para. 23, p, 159.

It is needless to point out that this is merely a verbose, obscure, and not very ingenuous repetition of the assurance given by Lord Northbrook,—the very same limitations being carefully reserved, and Lord Lytton being simply authorised to go as near as he could to the appearance of an unconditional guarantee without actually giving it. The whole paragraph is an elaborate repetition of the expedient by which it had been suggested that the Ameer should be cajoled on the dynastic guarantee in support of Abdoolah Jan.

In return for these illusory and deceptive guarantees, the largest and most absolute demands were to be made on the unfortunate Ameer. These demands were concealed in terms quite wide enough to cover that which the Ameer had always dreaded and suspected—the complete transfer to us of the whole government of his country. The British Government was not only to have for their Agents "undisputed access to the frontier positions" of the Afghan Kingdom; not only were they to "have adequate means of confidentially conferring with the Ameer upon all matters as to which the proposed declaration would recognise a community of interests;" but much more—"they must be entitled to expect becoming attention to their friendly counsels; and the Ameer must be made to understand that, subject to all fair allowance for the condition of the country and the character of the population, territories ultimately dependent upon British power for their defence must not be closed to those of the Queen's officers or subjects who may be duly authorised to enter them."

It is needless to point out that there is nothing in the way of interference that might not be brought within the range of this sweeping declaration. The first Article of the Treaty imposed by Russia on the Khan of Khiva was a more honest, but not a more complete, announcement of political subjection. "The Khan acknowledges himself to be the humble servant of the Emperor of All the Russias." This is at least plain and honest speaking, whilst it is to be observed that in that Treaty Russia did not inflict on the vassal Khan the additional humiliation of pretending to respect his independence. The demand to establish an Agency in Herat, or even at several of the cities of Afghanistan, sinks into insignificance when compared with the intimation that the country might be filled with European officers and emissaries, to any extent the British Government might please, and with the intimation also that the Ameer was expected to pay "becoming attention" to whatever that Government might consider to be "friendly counsel," whether on domestic or on foreign affairs.

Having thus instructed Lord Lytton to make these tremendous demands upon the Ameer, in complete contempt and violation of Treaties and of the pledges of Lord Mayo, it seems to have occurred to Lord Salisbury that he had not even yet sufficiently guarded against the possibility of too much being offered in return. He reverts, therefore, in the 26th paragraph to the subject of the guarantees to be held out to the Ameer. He tells the Viceroy that any promise to be given to Shere Ali of "adequate aid against actual and unprovoked attack by

any foreign Power" must be "not vague, but strictly guarded and clearly circumscribed." As if in mockery it was added, that, if a personal promise—in itself so equivocal—were offered to the Ameer, it would "probably satisfy his Highness," "if the terms of it be unequivocal." But the Viceroy was free to consider the advantages of a Treaty "on the above-indicated basis." The Despatch then proceeds to inform the new Viceroy that the "conduct of Shere Ali has more than once been characterised by so significant a disregard of the wishes and interests of the Government of India, that the irretrievable alienation of his confidence in the sincerity and power of that Government, was a contingency which could not be dismissed as impossible." This is an accusation which is not supported by a single proof, or even by a single illustration. It is in the teeth of the evidence which had just been given on the subject by the Government of India. The Ameer had given no other indication of a "disregard of the wishes and interests of the Government of India" than was involved in a desire to keep that Government to the promises it had given him. It is, however, the common resource of violent men to traduce those whom they are about to wrong.

There is one other passage in these Instructions which cannot be passed over without notice. It is a passage which refers to what may be called the Russophobian literature of England and of India. It states very truly that translations of that literature were carefully studied by the Ameer. "Sentiments of irritation and alarm at the advancing power of Russia in Central Asia find

frequent expression through the English press, in language which, if taken by Shere Ali for a revelation of the mind of the English Government, must have long been accumulating in his mind impressions unfavourable to its confidence in British power." The conclusion drawn from this seems to be,—to judge from the rest of the Despatch,—that it would be well to convince him of our power at the expense of giving him the most just reason to distrust both our moderation and our good faith. How different is the conclusion from that drawn from the same premises by Lord Mayo! I have shown how, in going to Umballa, he wrote to me of the accusations made against the Ameer by the Anglo-Indian press,—then in one of its periodical fits of excitement about the "advances of Russia,"—to the effect that Shere Ali was a mere Russian tool. The inference Lord Mayo drew was, that it was all the more necessary for him to show the silence of conscious strength,—to treat the Ameer with kindness and with confidence,—to give him every possible indication that we had a sincere desire to respect his independence, and to strengthen his Government. In the instructions of Lord Lytton his independence was trampled under foot, and the new Viceroy was educated in every sentiment towards him which could inspire a treatment of distrust and of indignity.

It is the authors and admirers of this Despatch—so imperious in its tone, so violent in its demands, so hollow in its promises—who, in the late debates in Parliament, have pretended that Lord Northbrook in 1873 did not

sufficiently favour the Ameer by giving him an unconditional guarantee.

It is not to be understood, however, that this Despatch of the 28th of February, 1876, exhausted the instructions with which Lord Lytton was sent out to India. In the first place, the Despatch as given to Parliament, long and detailed as it is, is only an "extract." We do not know what other injunctions may have been laid upon him. But, in the second place, Lord Lytton did not leave England till towards the end of March. During that time he had been in personal conference with Her Majesty's Government, and also with the Russian Ambassador in England.* We know nothing of the results of these conferences, except by occasional allusions to them in later speeches and writings of the Viceroy. From several passages in these we derive one fact which is not unimportant, although, indeed, it is a fact which makes itself sufficiently apparent from other evidence—and that is, that during these months of conference at home, every Indian question was regarded from the one point of view which was engrossing all attention at the time—namely, the point of view which connected it with the Central Asian question. Not only Afghan questions, but all questions affecting what was called border or frontier policy—however local they would have been considered in other days—were canvassed and discussed entirely in their "Mervous" aspects †

* Ibid. (Simla Narrative), para. 21, p. 165.

† See Parl. Pap. Biluchistan, II., 1877, No. 194, para. 17, p. 356. It is here distinctly stated that the Viceroy, "having had the advan-

A remarkable illustration of this was afforded by transactions which were going on at the very time of Lord Lytton's appointment. It so happened that one of those questions was in a condition which lent itself very handily to their state of mind. For many years there had been troubles in Beloochistan—troubles between the Khan of Khelat and his nobles and chiefs which often threatened civil war, and were very inconvenient to our trade through Scinde. The Government of India had long been in Treaty relations with this "Khanate," which entitled them to intervene, and to send troops for the occupation of the country. Lord Northbrook had to deal with this matter, and had been advised by his frontier officers to occupy the country with a military force. Instead of this, he had sent an officer, Major Sandeman, who, by less violent measures, had made some progress in remedying the evils which had arisen. But just before he left India, he found it necessary to despatch this officer again into Khelat, and this time attended by a considerable escort,—upwards of 1000 men,—which amounted to at least a military demonstration. Now, as the occupation of Quetta, a town in the Khan of Khelat's territory was one of the favourite measures always recommended

---

tage before leaving England of personal communications" with the Secretary of State, "was strongly impressed by the importance of endeavouring to deal with them (viz., our frontier relations) as indivisible parts of a single Imperial question mainly dependent for its solution on the foreign policy of Her Majesty's Government." It is by this means that the people of India are to be made to pay for the policy of the Government in the Balkan Peninsula.

by those who were nervous on the Central Asian Question, it was obviously not only possible, but easy to take advantage of this state of things to make the occupation of Quetta appear to arise out of a purely local exigency, and so to gain an important step in a new policy, quietly and almost without observation. Accordingly, this seems to have been the design of the Government in the conferences with Lord Lytton before he left London. The last step taken by Lord Northbrook did not fit in quite conveniently with this design, and a somewhat unusual incident occurred. The Viceroys of India always continue in the full exercise of their powers until their successors are actually sworn in at Calcutta. Those who succeed them are generally men not previously well versed in Indian questions, and they usually approach the duties and responsibilities of that great office with a strong sense of the necessity of learning, and of not proceeding hastily on preconceived opinions. Lord Lytton, however, on this occasion, took the unprecedented step of endeavouring to interfere with the action of the existing Viceroy in a very delicate matter, before he himself had been installed in office, if not before he had even set foot in India.* Lord Northbrook very properly declined to divest himself of his functions whilst it was still his duty to discharge them. It had been his duty during a very considerable

* I owe this fact to a statement made during the late debates in the House of Commons by Lord George Hamilton. The interference of Lord Lytton with the then existing Government of India is stated to have been by telegraph.

time to consider carefully all that was involved in the method of dealing with the Khan of Khelat, and he determined to prosecute the measures on which he and his Government had decided, notwithstanding the unprecedented conduct of Lord Lytton in endeavouring to interfere. But the fact of this endeavour having been made at all is a sufficient indication of the impulse under which the new Viceroy went out, to consider everything in connexion with the prevalent excitement on the "Eastern Question," and to start in India what was called "an Imperial policy."

Let us now follow the course which was taken in this spirit with reference to our relations with Afghanistan.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD LYTTON IN APRIL, 1876, TO THE OPENING OF THE PESHAWUR CONFERENCE ON THE 30TH JANUARY, 1877.

THE first thing done by the Government, in communication with Lord Lytton, was to select Sir Lewis Pelly as the Special Envoy who was to be sent to the Ameer. Sir Lewis Pelly is an active and very energetic officer. But he is the very type of all that makes a British Resident most dreadful in the eyes of an Indian Prince who values or who desires to keep even the shadow of independence. His name was at this time notorious over India, on account of his connexion with the very strong measures the Government of India had been compelled to take in the case of the Guicowar of Baroda. There have been, and there still are, many officers in our service in India who have obtained a great reputation for their influence over native Princes, and over the Sovereigns of neighbouring States, by virtue of qualities which seldom fail to secure their confidence. To pass over all of these, and to single out Sir Lewis Pelly, was a very clear publication to the Indian world how Shere Ali was to be treated.

The next thing which Lord Lytton did was to revert to the scheme to which Lord Northbrook refused to be a party—the scheme, namely, of not telling at once to the Ameer the truth respecting the real intention of the Mission,—of finding some artificial "pretext" for sending it at all,—and of setting forth in connexion with it certain objects which were to be merely "ostensible." In the 23rd paragraph of the Simla Narrative* Lord Lytton gives his account of this proceeding as if it were one of a perfectly creditable kind. He tells us that the "opportunity and pretext" which had hitherto been wanting for the despatch of a complimentary Special Mission to Cabul were "furnished" by two circumstances. The first of these was his own recent accession to the office of Viceroy of India, whilst the second was the recent assumption by the Queen of the title of Empress of India. With this "ostensible" object, but with "secret instructions" of a very different kind, the Special Envoy was to be preceded by a "trusted native officer, charged to deliver a letter to the Ameer from the Commissioner of Peshawur." This "pretext" was surely rather too transparent. Shere Ali had seen Lord Lawrence succeeded by Lord Mayo, and he had seen Lord Mayo succeeded by Lord Northbrook; but neither of these Viceroys had announced their recent accession to office in so formal a manner. There did not seem to be any special reason why Lord Lytton should blow such a trumpet before him, which had not been blown by his predecessors.

* Afghanistan, 1878, I., No. 36, p. 166.

Then, as regarded the new title of the Queen, unless it was to make some change, not merely in the form, but in the substance of our relations, both with our own feudatory Princes and with neighbouring Sovereigns whom we professed to regard as independent, it did not seem obvious why it should be announced to Shere Ali by a Special Envoy. Under the peculiar circumstances of the case, such a method of intimating this event would naturally rather rouse suspicion than allay it.

The letter of the Commissioner of Peshawur, written on behalf of the new Viceroy, was dated May 5, and reached the Ameer on the 17th of May, 1876. It opened by telling him that at a long interview which he had with Lord Lytton, his Excellency had "enquired very cordially after his Highness's health and welfare, and those of his Highness Abdoollah Jan." It informed him of the Viceroy's intentions of sending his friend, Sir Lewis Pelly, for the purposes already explained. No consent was asked on the part of the Ameer—thus departing at once from all previous usage and understanding on the subject. It expressed confidence that the Ameer would fully reciprocate the friendly feelings of the Viceroy. It begged the favour of an intimation of the place at which it would be most convenient for the Ameer to receive the Envoy; and it concluded by informing him that Sir Lewis Pelly, who was honoured by the new Viceroy with his Excellency's fullest confidence, would be able to discuss with his Highness matters of common interest to the two Governments.* As it was perfectly well known that the

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 6, p. 174.

Ameer thought it unsafe for him to leave Cabul, on account of Yakoob Khan's presence there, this letter of the Viceroy was a peremptory message, not only that a Mission would be sent, but practically also that it must be received at the Capital.

The Ameer's reply, which was dated May 22nd, is a model of courtesy and of what he himself calls "farsightedness." He was delighted to hear of the interviews of the Commissioner with the new Viceroy. He was delighted to hear of the accession to office of his Excellency. He was delighted to hear that the Queen had become "Shah-inshah." He added, with much significance, that he had a "firm hope" that from this most excellent title of the Great Queen, "an additional measure of repose and security in all that belonged to the affairs of the servants of God would be experienced in reality."

It is never pleasant for any man who is dealing with a neighbour through "pretexts" to be told so gently and so civilly that they are seen through. It must have been particularly provoking to the new Viceroy to be assured of a firm hope on the part of the Ameer that the new Imperial title of the Queen was to be connected with new securities for a peaceful and reassuring policy.

But the Ameer now proceeded to make another intimation which must have been still more provoking. It was part of the case, as we have seen, which the Government and Lord Lytton desired to put forward, that the assurances given to the Ameer in 1873 had not been sufficient, and that on account of this he had no sufficient confidence in our support. This case was seriously damaged by the

declaration of the Ameer, which immediately followed, that he saw no use in the coming of new Envoys, inasmuch as his Agent had "formerly, personally, held political parleys at the station of Simla," when "those subjects full of advisability for the exaltation and permanence of friendly and political relations, having been considered sufficient and efficient, were entered in two letters, and need not be repeated now."* So awkward was this passage for Lord Lytton that in the subsequent Simla Narrative we find him compelled to put a gloss upon it, in order to extract its sting. In the same twenty-third paragraph of that Narrative to which I have already referred, the Ameer is represented as having said that he "desired no change in his relations with the British Government, which appeared to have been defined by that Government to its own satisfaction at the Simla Conference." The letter of the Ameer does not say this. It does not say or imply that the satisfaction arising out of the Simla Conference was a one-sided satisfaction, felt by the British Government, but not felt by himself. And when we find the Viceroy resorting to this gloss upon the words we understand where the words themselves were found to pinch.

But the next sentences of the Ameer's reply must have been still more unpleasant. He ventured to intimate that he knew quite well that the Viceroy had some ulterior designs, and that the pretexts he had put forward were "ostensible." He begged that if any new con-

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 7, p. 175.

ferences were intended "for the purpose of refreshing and benefiting the State of Afghanistan," "then let it be hinted," in order that a confidential Agent of the Ameer "being presented with the things concealed in the generous heart of the English Government should reveal them" to the Ameer.

This letter of Shere Ali was accompanied by a letter from our Native Agent, Atta Mohammed Khan, explaining all that he knew of the motives which had actuated the Ameer, and all the arguments which had been put forward in his Durbar, upon the proposals of the Viceroy. In this letter, the real fundamental objection which has always actuated the Rulers of Afghanistan in resisting the reception of European officers, is fully set forth. That objection is the fear that these Agents would be perpetually interfering—making demands or proposals which it would be equally embarrassing for the Ameer to grant or to refuse. One of the other arguments put forward, as supporting and more or less covering this one great actuating motive, was the argument that if the British Government were to urge European officers on the Ameer the Russian Government might follow its example. If this argument had been used in the letter of the Ameer it would have formed a legitimate ground of some temperate and friendly remonstrance on the part of the Viceroy; because it implies a misrepresentation of the well-known relative positions of the British and Russian Governments towards Afghanistan. But this argument was not used in the letter of the Ameer. It was only reported as having been used in the private con-

sultations of the Durbar.* Our knowledge of the fact that it had been used at all is, indeed, a signal illustration of the fidelity with which we were served by our native Agency, and of the fallacy of at least one of the pretences on which the new policy was founded.

The letter of the Ameer must have reached the Commissioner of Peshawur about the 3rd of June, 1876.† But no reply was given to it for more than a month. In the Simla Narrative, the Viceroy, who himself avows that his own letter had been sent upon a "pretext," and had made proposals which were only "ostensible," has the courage to describe the reply of the unfortunate Ameer as a response of "studied ambiguity;"‡ the truth being that there was about it no ambiguity whatever, and that it was a reply representing straightforwardness itself when contrasted with the letter of Lord Lytton.

Cajolery having failed, it was now determined to try the effect of threats. Accordingly, after the lapse of more than a month, on the 8th of July, the Commissioner of Peshawur addressed another letter to the Ameer—the terms of which were dictated, of course, by the Government of India. We have no official information how this interval of a month had been employed. But we have the best reason to believe that Lord Lytton had difficulties with his Council. Three of its most distin-

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 8, pp. 175, 176.

† I have assumed here that it takes twelve days to send a letter from Peshawur to Cabul, because in several cases this time seems to have been actually taken. But I am informed that four days only are required.

‡ Ibid., No. 36, para. 24, p. 167.

guished members, Sir William Muir, Sir Henry Norman, and Sir Arthur Hobhouse, were opposed altogether to the new "Imperial" policy. Somehow, the expression of their opinions has been suppressed. But it is at least extremely probable, from the time spent in discussion and from information which has been published, that their remonstrances had some effect, and that the letter to the Ameer finally decided upon may have been delayed by their resistance. The purport of this letter, and the spirit which it was intended to express, was more fully explained in a covering letter which was not addressed directly to the Ameer, but to the British Agent at his Court. This covering letter was written not only to comment upon what the Ameer had said in his own official reply, but also upon the report which had been furnished by our Agent of the debates in the Durbar. It was, therefore, in itself, a very remarkable exposure of that other pretext so long put forward by the Indian Secretary, that our Mohammedan Agent at Cabul did not give us full and trustworthy information as to what was going on in the Capital of the Ameer. Assuming the perfect correctness of our Agent's information, it commented with severity and even bitterness on one or two of the motives and arguments of the Government of Cabul. Some of these arguments it misrepresents. For example, it refers to the fear lest the Envoy "should address to the Ameer demands incompatible with the interests of His Highness."* This is not a correct or a

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 10, p. 177.

fair account of the fear which had been reported by our Agent. That fear was that the Envoy might "put forward such weighty matters of State that its entertainment by His Highness, in view of the demands of the time, might prove difficult," and that the Ameer should find himself obliged to reject it verbally. There is all the difference in the world between these two representations. The one implies a charge against the British Government, or a suspicion of its intentions, that it might desire to injure the Ameer; whereas, the other implies nothing more than that he feared proposals which might to him appear inexpedient, and that he desired to keep his freedom and his political independence in not being exposed to undue pressure upon such matters.

The letter does indeed give assurances to the Ameer of a desire to consider in a friendly spirit all that he might have to suggest. But behind all these assurances the Ameer knew that the real object was to force upon him the abandonment of the engagement made, and the pledges given, by previous Viceroys on the subject of British officers resident in his dominions. He knew, moreover, that this object was aimed at not by persuasion but by threats. He was warned of the "grave responsibility" he would incur if he deliberately rejected the opportunity afforded him. But the bitterest passage of this letter was that which referred to the frank indication given by the Ameer that he knew there was some object behind,—which had not been explained to him in the "ostensible" purport of the proposed Mission. This detection of the truth by Shere Ali rouses all the indigna-

tion of the Viceroy. He has the courage to talk of the "sincerity" of his own intentions. He denounces the "apparent mistrust" with which his letter had been received by the Cabul Durbar, and he angrily declines to receive an Agent from the Ameer who was to be sent with a view of becoming acquainted with what the Ameer "designated" as the "objects sought" by the British Government. Finally, the Ameer was warned that the responsibility of refusing would rest entirely on the Government of Afghanistan.*

The letter which was addressed personally to the Ameer, and which bore the same date, was much shorter. But it is remarkable in several ways. In the first place it reiterated the "ostensible" pretext that the Envoy was intended to announce Lord Lytton's accession to office, and also the assumption by the Queen of the Imperial title. But, in the second place, it gave renewed assurances that the Viceroy was sincerely desirous, not only of maintaining, but of materially strengthening, the bands of friendship and confidence between the two Governments, and it gave some obscure intimations of the benefits to be conferred. It did not distinctly promise a dynastic guarantee, but it hinted at it. Still less did it explain the device under which it had been discovered how an apparent dynastic guarantee could be given without involving any engagement whatever to support a "*de facto* order of succession" in case of its being disputed. But it did cautiously and carefully, and in very guarded

* Ibid, pp. 176-177.

language, just suggest to Shere Ali that something might be in store for him "more particularly affecting Afghanistan and the personal welfare of His Highness and his dynasty." Finally, the letter ended with a threat that if the refusal of the Ameer should render nugatory the friendly intentions of the Viceroy, his Excellency would be obliged "to regard Afghanistan as a State which has voluntarily isolated itself from the alliance and support of the British Government."*

These communications, which were dated at Peshawur on the 8th of July, must have reached the Ameer about the 20th of that month. On receipt of the letter to himself, together with the farther explanations, all conceived in the same spirit, which our native Agent was at the same time ordered to give him, the unfortunate Ameer was naturally at once alarmed and incensed. He saw that the powerful British Government was determined to break—and was then actually breaking—the promises made to him by former Viceroys, and he saw that this determination was unqualified and unredeemed by any promises which were of the slightest value. Whenever a Mohammedan Sovereign gets into a passion, or into a scrape out of which he does not see his way,—whenever, in short, he is driven to the wall,—his uniform resource is to appeal, or to contemplate an appeal, to Moslem fanaticism. On this occasion, Shere Ali was reported to have looked round about him, and to have consulted "Mollahs" as to whether he could get up what is called

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 9, p. 176.

a "Jehad" or religious war. This, however, was merely a personal display of temper, and no symptom of it appeared in his official communications. He took some time, but, under the circumstances, by no means an unreasonable time, to consider his course. His reply was dated September 3, 1876—or six weeks after he had received the Viceroy's letter. It is characteristic of the spirit in which the Simla Narrative of these transactions was written, and of the accuracy of its statements, that the 25th paragraph of that document calls this interval "a significant delay of two months." Considering that the Viceroy had himself delayed to answer the Ameer's former letter of the 22nd of May from about the 3rd of June, at which date it must have reached Peshawur, till the 8th of July, a period of five weeks,—considering that the British Government had nothing to fear, and nothing to lose—and considering that the Ameer had, or deemed himself to have, everything at stake, and had taken only one week longer to deliberate than Lord Lytton himself, this invidious misstatement of the Ameer's conduct is as ungenerous as it is inaccurate.

On the 3rd of September the Ameer replied, making three alternative proposals. One was that the Viceroy should agree to receive an Envoy from Cabul, who might explain everything. The next was that the Viceroy would send an Envoy to meet on the frontier a selected representative of the Afghan State. A third was that the British Native Agent at Cabul, who had long been intimately acquainted with all his wishes, should be summoned by the Viceroy, and should expound the whole

state of affairs, and that on his return to the Ameer he should bring a similar explanation from the Government of India.*

On the 16th of September the Viceroy replied through the Commissioner of Peshawur, accepting the last of these three alternatives, on the condition that the Ameer should explain his views fully and confidentially to the British Agent. In that case the Agent would be as frankly informed of the views of the British Government, and would explain them to the Ameer on his return to Cabul.† Our Agent, Atta Mohammed Khan, was directed to make all speed to meet the Viceroy at Simla, and not to let the object of his journey be known if any inquiries should be made about it.

The British Agent at Cabul, the Nawab Atta Mohammed Khan, reached Simla in time to have a conversation with Sir Lewis Pelly and others on behalf of the Viceroy, on the 7th of October. The Ameer had declared that he had nothing to add to the wishes he had expressed at Umballa in 1869, and through his Minister at Simla in 1873. But the Agent, on being asked to give his own estimate of the feelings of the Ameer and of the causes "which had estranged him from the British Government," mentioned eight different circumstances or transactions which were "among the causes of annoyance and estrangement." At the head of these was the Seistan Arbitration. Our recent doings in Khelat came next. Our inter-

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 14, p. 179.
† Ibid., Inclos. 16, p. 179.

ference on behalf of his rebellious son, Yakoob Khan, was third in the list. The fourth was our sending presents to his feudatory, the Khan of Wakhan. The fifth was the results of the Conferences in 1873, during which his Minister had received some personal offence. The sixth was the terms of certain recent letters from the Commissioner of Peshawur. The seventh was that the Ameer counted on our own self-interest as the best security for our protection of his country. The eighth was our refusal to give him the offensive and defensive Treaty which Lord Mayo had refused to him at Umballa, and which had been refused ever since.

On the other hand, the Agent specified seven things which the Ameer really desired from us. First and foremost of these things was an engagement that no Englishman should reside in Afghanistan, or at all events in Cabul. The second was a renunciation of all sympathy or connexion with Yakoob Khan, and a dynastic guarantee of the succession as determined by himself. The third was a promise "to support the Ameer, on demand, with troops and money, in all and every case of attack from without," as well as against internal disturbance.* The fourth was a permanent subsidy. The fifth was an engagement not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. The sixth was that in any engagement made, words should be introduced making the alliance strictly offensive and defensive on both sides. The seventh was that we should recognise him by some new title, as he considered himself quite equal to the Shah of Persia.†

---

* Ibid, p. 182. † Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 18, pp. 181, 182.

Having ascertained all this, which showed that the Ameer adhered closely and pertinaciously to the very same desires which he had vainly pressed on former Viceroys, Lord Lytton determined to see the Agent himself, and was, of course, obliged to make up his mind how far he would go in the direction of conceding, or appearing to concede, what his predecessors in office had been compelled to refuse. Strange to say, he began the conversation by telling the Agent that his information "was very full and interesting, but quite new." It will be seen from the narrative previously given that, on the contrary, there was very little indeed that was new, and that the Ameer's principal objects had been perfectly well known, and very accurately appreciated both by Lord Mayo and by Lord Northbrook. Lord Lytton then proceeded to explain to the Agent that the Ameer was mistaken in supposing that we should support him unless it were our own interest to do so, and that if he did not choose to please us, "the assistance which he seemed at present disinclined to seek or deserve, might, at any moment, be very welcome to one or other of his rivals." He further informed the Agent that the moment we ceased to regard Afghanistan as a friendly and firmly allied State there was nothing to prevent us from coming to "an understanding with Russia which might have the effect of wiping Afghanistan out of the map altogether." This was very threatening language. There was a good deal more of a similar kind, conceived in the worst possible taste. Thus, the Ameer was to be told that the British military power could either be "spread round him as a

ring of iron," or "it could break him as a reed,"—and again that he was as "an earthen pipkin between two iron pots." But bad as all this was in tone, it did not involve any incorrect statement of facts. It was accompanied, however, by another announcement for which, so far as I know, there was not the shadow of justification. "If the Ameer does not desire to come to a speedy understanding with us, Russia does; and she desires it at his expense."* If this passage has any meaning, that meaning appears to be that Russia desired to come to some arrangement with England under which the Kingdom of Cabul was to be sacrificed either in whole or in part. No papers justifying this statement have been presented to Parliament. I believe it to be one without the shadow of a foundation.

The Viceroy next proceeded to make a very satisfactory declaration—which was, that the British Government was then "able to pour an overwhelming force into Afghanistan, either for the protection of the Ameer, or for the vindication of its own interests, long before a single Russian soldier could reach Cabul." It is well to remember this: but the confidence expressed is not very consistent with the context either of words or of conduct.

It now became necessary, however, for the Viceroy to come to the point—how much he was prepared to offer to the Ameer. As preparatory to this he found it convenient, as his official instructions had done, to disparage

* Ibid. p. 183.

what the Ameer had got from former Viceroys. Lord Lytton, therefore, went on to observe that "the Ameer has hitherto had only verbal understandings with us. The letter given him by Lord Mayo was not in the nature of a Treaty engagement, and was, no doubt, vague and general in its terms." I have already expressed my opinion on this attempt to impair the binding obligation of solemn promises and pledges given by the Viceroys of India, whether they be merely verbal, or written only in the form of letters. It is a doctrine incompatible with that confidence which has hitherto been maintained in the honour of the British Government in India, and cannot be too severely condemned. It is a doctrine incompatible with the faithful fulfilment by the Crown of the assurances given in that very solemn document, the Proclamation issued on the assumption by the Crown of the direct Government of India—"We hereby announce to the Native Princes of India, that all the treaties and engagements made with them by, or under the authority of the East India Company, are by us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained." On no other principle can we keep our ground in India, and no Viceroy before Lord Lytton has ever attempted to evade it.

Lord Lytton then proceeded to detail the concessions he was willing to make. He agreed to the formula, "that the friends and enemies of either State should be those of the other." But the very next concession showed that some reserve was nevertheless maintained. Shere Ali had always asked for an absolute guarantee against aggression. But Lord Lytton would not omit the quali-

fying word which all former Viceroys had insisted upon —namely, "unprovoked." Of course the insertion of this word kept open the discretion of the British Government in each case, and, moreover, implied some sort of control over the foreign policy of the Ameer. The Viceroy also agreed to "recognise Abdoolah Jan as the Ameer's successor." But this was also qualified with great care and some ingenuity. The qualification of the Cabinet, as we have seen, would have reduced this guarantee practically to a nullity. Lord Lytton tried hard, at a second interview with the Agent, to express the qualification in a manner as little formidable as possible to the Ameer. "If the Ameer, or his heir, were ever actually ejected from the throne of Cabul, the British Government would not undertake a war with the Afghans for their restoration. If, however, the Ameer gave notice in due time, while still in possession of his throne, that he was in difficulties, and needed material assistance, such assistance would be afforded within the limits of what might be found practically possible at the time."* I do not deny that this was quite as much as the Ameer could reasonably ask. On the contrary, I entirely agree with Lord Lytton that it was so, and quite as much as the British Government could safely give. But it was no appreciable addition to what had been actually done by Lord Lawrence and by Lord Mayo. They had both assisted him with money and with arms—on the very ground that he was in actual possession of his throne, although still in danger of losing

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 20, p. 185.

it. This indeed had been their declared policy, and to this all their promises and assurances had pointed. But this was not what the Ameer wanted. It kept that element of discretion in the hands of the British Government to judge of the policy to be pursued in each case, which destroyed the whole value of it in the opinion of the Ameer. Lord Lytton did indeed make one rather shy offer connected with this subject, which, I venture to think, might have landed us in a very false position, and in a very unjust course of conduct. He offered, if Shere Ali wished it, to keep Yakoob Khan in safe custody in India. That is to say, the British Government were to act as jailors for the Ameer of Cabul. If this meant that we were to bind ourselves by Treaty to prevent Yakoob, under whatever circumstances, from becoming a candidate for the throne of his father, it was a most dangerous offer, and we cannot be too thankful that it was not accepted.

Lastly, Lord Lytton did agree to offer a yearly subsidy to the Ameer, the amount of which, however, and the conditions of which, were left open for detailed consideration.

On the other hand, in return for these very small advances on what Shere Ali had already obtained in the promises and assurances of former Viceroys, Lord Lytton required him to give up absolutely that on which, as we have seen, he set the highest value. His foreign policy and conduct was to be absolutely under our control. This control was to be symbolised, if it was not to be actually exercised, by British officers resident at Herat and else-

where on his frontiers. Afghanistan was to be freely open to Englishmen, official and unofficial. The result was that the Ameer was offered nothing of that which he really desired, whilst, on the other hand, he was required to grant to us the whole of that demand which he had always regarded with the greatest dread.

Primed with this strange mixture of bluster and of baits, our Agent was sent off to Cabul, to translate it all as best he could to the unfortunate Ameer. For this purpose he was furnished with an "Aide Mémoire." It summed up the promises as plausibly as possible; it maintained the substantial limitations in terms as subdued and obscure as could be devised; but it distinctly made all these promises absolutely dependent on the new condition about the reception of British officers—and worse than this, it plainly intimated that not only were the new promises to be absolutely dependent on this condition, but the maintenance of existing promises also. Without that new condition, the Viceroy "could not do anything for his assistance, whatever might be the dangers or difficulties of his future position."*

The Agent was also charged with a letter from the Viceroy to the Ameer, in which Shere Ali was referred on details to the full explanations given to our Agent. But in this letter the Viceroy ventures on the assertion that he was now offering to the Ameer what he had vainly asked from former Viceroys. This assertion is thus expressed: "Your Highness will thus be assured by the Agent that

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 21, pp. 185, 186.

I shall be prepared to comply with the wishes which you announced through your Agent at Simla in 1873, and to which you have adhered in more recent communications."*

But our native Agent was not the only diplomatist charged with this important mission. The Ameer had offered, as one of his alternatives, to send a special Envoy to meet upon the frontier another similar Envoy from the Viceroy. Lord Lytton would now graciously agree to this proposal. Sir Lewis Pelly was to be his Envoy. In anticipation of the Ameer's consent, this officer was furnished with a long paper of recapitulations and instructions, dated October 17th, 1876, and also with a Draft Treaty.†

It is a matter of the highest interest to observe in these papers how deftly the delicate subject is dealt with in regard to the difference between what the Ameer desired to get, and what it was now proposed to give to him. In the fifth paragraph of Sir Lewis Pelly's new instructions he is desired to be governed by the terms of Lord Salisbury's despatch of the 28th of February, 1876.‡ We have seen how very safe and how very dexterously drawn this despatch was. But, on the other hand, as it was desirable to show as fine a hand as possible at this juncture, the following audacious statement is made in the sixth paragraph :—"The conditions on which the Governor-General in Council is now prepared to enter into

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 22, p. 186.
† Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 23 and 24, pp. 187–191.
‡ Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 23, p. 187.

closer and more definite relations with the Government of Afghanistan are in every particular the same as those desired by the Ameer himself on the occasion of his visit to Umballa in 1869, and again in more or less general terms so urged by him on the Government of India through his Minister, Syud Noor Mohammed Shah, in 1873."

I call this statement audacious, because, as regards the transactions of 1869, it is contradicted in every syllable by an authoritative document which the Government of India must have had before it at the time. In certain paragraphs of Lord Mayo's despatch to me, of the 1st of July, 1869, we have a full explanation by that Viceroy of the unconditional character of the guarantees which were then desired by the Ameer, and which Lord Mayo had decided it was impossible to give him.* The assertion that the assurances which the Viceroy was now willing to offer to the Ameer corresponded "in every particular" with those thus described by Lord Mayo, is an assertion which it is impossible to characterise too severely.

Considering that Lord Lytton had just heard from the mouth of our own Agent at Cabul how very different "in every particular" the Ameer's real demands continued to be from the concessions which it was possible for the Viceroy or for any British Government to make, this broad assertion is one which is truly astonishing. It is all the more so, as in the very same document there is another paragraph (25), which seems to lay down the

* Ibid., No. 19, paras. 8, 9, 10, 11, and 45, pp. 95 and 97.

principle that the British Government could not go further than was consistent with the principles laid down by Lord Mayo in 1869, and the next paragraph (26) proceeds thus:—"For the same reason, the British Government cannot contract any obligation to support the Princes of Afghanistan against the opposition of the Afghan nation, or any large majority of their subjects whose loyalty has been alienated by misgovernment or oppression."*

In like manner, when we turn to the Draft Treaty which was placed in Sir Lewis Pelly's hands, we find the most elaborate precautions taken to prevent the assurances given from coming near to the guarantees which the Ameer really wanted. This is done by the constant introduction of qualifying words, and by a perfect wilderness of saving clauses. Let us take the Articles most important to the Ameer. First comes the External Guarantee. The Third Article† professes to give it. There was less need of caution here, because this guarantee coincides with our own interest in almost every conceivable case. Nevertheless it was not to operate unless the Ameer had acted in strict conformity with the previous Article, which purported to be one of mutually offensive and defensive alliance. Nor was it to operate unless the Ameer had refrained from (1) provocation of, or (2) aggression on, or (3) interference with, the States and territories beyond his frontier. Besides all this, the succeeding Article, the Fourth, specifies that the Ameer

* Ibid., p. 189. † Ibid., p. 190.

was to conduct all his relations with foreign States in harmony with the policy of the British Government. Next comes the Dynastic Guarantee. It professes to be given by the Ninth Article. But this Article simply "agrees to acknowledge whomsoever his Highness might nominate as his heir-apparent, and to discountenance the pretensions of any rival claimant to the throne." But this is no more than Lord Mayo's promise of "viewing with severe displeasure" any disturbers of the existing order. There is no direct promise whatever to support the Ameer's nomination, if it should turn out to be unpopular in Afghanistan.

But the provisions of the Tenth Article are the best specimens of Lord Lytton's favours. This Article professes to provide for our non-interference in domestic affairs, and yet at the same time to hold out a prospect to the Ameer of support in the event of domestic troubles. This required some nice steering. Accordingly the saving clauses are positively bewildering. There is, first, the promise of abstention. Then there is the exception —"except at the invocation of the Ameer." Then there are limitations on such an appeal. It must be to avert the recurrence of civil war, and to protect peaceful interests. The support may be material, or only moral, as the British Government may choose. The quantity of the support in either case was to be measured by their own opinion of what was necessary for the aid of the Ameer. But, again, even this aid was to be limited to the protection (1) of authority which was "equitable," (2) of order which was "settled," and (3) against an

ambition which was "personal," or (4) a competition for power which was "unlawful."

I do not say that any one of these limitations was in itself unreasonable, or even unnecessary. But they were all elaborately designed to keep in the hands of the British Government, under the forms of a Treaty, that complete freedom to judge of each case as it might arise, according to times and circumstances, which Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook had been determined to maintain. It was, however, precisely for the purpose of limiting this freedom that the Ameer had desired to get a Treaty. To offer him a Treaty which kept that freedom as it was, could be no response to his desires. It was, therefore, worse than an "ostensible pretext" to represent such a Treaty as a concession to the Ameer of that for which he had asked. The Viceroy, however, did not trust wholly to these illusory representations of the effect of the offered Treaty. He knew that the Ameer was in want of money. The hooks were therefore heavily baited. If the Ameer agreed to sell his independence, he was to get £200,000 on the ratification of the Treaty, and an annual subsidy of £120,000.*

But, guarded as the Draft Treaty is in all these ways, the Viceroy seems to have been haunted by a nervous apprehension lest, after all, the Ameer should get some promise too definite and entangling. Sir Lewis Pelly was therefore also furnished with another "Aide Mémoire," for a "Subsidiary, Secret, and Explanatory Agreement."†

---

* Ibid., p. 192. † Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 25, p. 191.

In this document the reservations limiting our pretended guarantee are re-stated with laborious care.

In the twenty-seventh paragraph of the Simla Narrative, a very frank confession is made of the general result of these elaborate precautions. That result was that the poor Ameer, in return for all our demands, was to get practically nothing beyond what Lord Mayo had promised him in 1869. "These concessions, sanctioned by your Lordship's last instructions, would not practically commit the British Government to anything more than a formal re-affirmation of the assurances already given by it, through Lord Mayo, to the Ameer in 1869, and a public recognition of its inevitable obligations to the vital interests of its own Empire." That is to say—the Ameer was to get nothing except what former Viceroys had already given to him, and whatever more we might find it for our own interests to do on his behalf. After this confession, it is not to be denied that all the professions of Lord Lytton that he was now offering to the Ameer what he had desired, must be condemned as "ostensible pretexts."

I wish I had nothing more to add to the history of these deplorable transactions. But, unfortunately, there is another part of them, which must be told.

Lord Lytton had with him at Simla Captain Grey, who had been Persian Interpreter at the Conference at Umballá. As such he had become intimate with Noor Mohammed Khan, the confidential Minister of the Ameer. It seems to have occurred to the Viceroy that this friendship might be used for the purpose of representing to the

Ameer that the Government of India was now offering to him all that he had ever asked or demanded. Accordingly, on the 13th of October, which was two days after Sir L. Pelly had been furnished with all these elaborate limitations, and multitudinous saving clauses, Captain Grey was employed to write a private letter to his friend Noor Mohammed. It referred, coaxingly, to the feeling of the Afghan Minister, that he had ground for annoyance at what had passed in 1873. It did not expressly say that the writer concurred in this impression. But Noor Mohammed was asked to "let by-gones be by-gones." It pointed out to him that the Viceroy had now "accepted all the propositions which he (Noor Mohammed) made in 1873," imposing only the condition that he should be enabled to watch a frontier for which he was to render himself responsible, and that the Ameer, his friend and ally, should receive his Envoys. It then proceeded to remind the Afghan Minister of his alleged expressions at Umballa in 1869, and at Simla in 1873, as to the willingness of the Ameer at some future time to receive British officers in his Kingdom. It went on to represent the difficulty in the way at that time as having been the objection of former Viceroys to assume responsibility for the Afghan frontier. It represented that the existing Viceroy had no such objection, and was now prepared to assume that responsibility. In conclusion it intimated that hitherto, under former Viceroys, there had been "vacillation," because in the absence of a Treaty, "Ministers at home, and Viceroys in this country, exercised an unfettered discretion," but "where a Treaty

has been entered into everyone would be bound by its conditions."*

What can be said of this letter—of its representations of fact—of its constructions of conduct—of its interpretation of the Viceroy's offers? It seems to me that nothing can be said which could be too severe. It is in the highest degree disingenuous and crooked. No part of it is worse than that in which it re-affirms by implication the distinction between the binding character of a Treaty, and the not-binding character of a Viceroy's promises. It represents former Viceroys as having taken advantage of this distinction in vacillating conduct. For this accusation, so far as I know, there is no foundation in fact. Lord Mayo and I had objected in 1869 to a Treaty, not because it would have made the promises we did give more binding than we considered them to be when less formally recorded, but because a Treaty was expected by both parties to involve other promises—of a different kind—which we were not willing to give. But another most objectionable part of this letter is that in which the Viceroy endeavours to persuade the Afghan Minister that he was now offering to the Ameer all he wanted. It is to be remembered that besides the knowledge which the Government of India had at its command in respect to the large expectations of the Ameer in 1873 and in 1869, this letter was written just six days after our own Agent at Cabul had told the Viceroy that what the

* Afghan Corresp., II. 1878, No. 3, pp. 9, 10.

Ameer wanted was that "we should agree to support the Ameer, on demand, with troops and money, in all and every case of attack from without."*

Before proceeding to the next scene in this strange, eventful history, it will be well to notice how Lord Lytton himself tells his story, in the Simla Narrative, of the transactions through which we have just passed. That narrative professes to be founded on the documents which it enclosed, and yet it departs widely in many most important particulars from the facts which these documents supply. The account given in the 26th paragraph, of the causes of the Ameer's dissatisfaction, does not set forth these causes faithfully, as given by our native Agent, misstating their number, and, above all, putting them in a new order of relative importance. These deviations are not accidental. They appear to be all connected with one idea,—that of throwing as much blame as the Viceroy could on his immediate predecessor in the Government of India, and of keeping as much as possible in the background, or of suppressing altogether, those causes of dissatisfaction on the part of the Ameer which were inseparably connected with the desire of that Ruler to get what no British Government could give him. There is a total omission of one cause of complaint mentioned (the sixth) by the Agent, for no other assignable reason than that this one reflected directly on the tone and terms of one of Lord Lytton's own recent letters to

* Ibid., p. 182.

the Ameer. In the presence of much graver matter, it is not worth while pursuing this characteristic of the Simla Narrative in greater detail. It is, indeed, of much more than personal—it is of political importance. The Government of India is a continuous body, and does not formally change with a change of Viceroy. Any unfaithfulness to perfect fairness and accuracy in a narrative professing to give an account of its own action under former Viceroys, if it is committed deliberately, is a grave political offence. If it is committed unconsciously, and simply under the impulse of a strong desire to make out a personal or a party case, it is still deserving of serious notice and rebuke.

The next characteristic observable in the Simla Narrative of this time is the endeavour it makes to accumulate charges and innuendos against the unfortunate Ameer in respect to his communications with General Kaufmann. The statement in the 26th paragraph of the Simla Narrative is that the Ameer had been losing no opportunity of improving his relations with the Russian authorities in Central Asia, and that between General Kaufmann and his Highness "permanent diplomatic intercourse was now virtually established, by means of a constant succession of special Agents, who held frequent conferences with the Ameer, the subject and result of which were successfully kept secret." There is no justification for this most exaggerated statement in the papers which accompany Lord Lytton's narrative. On the contrary, he had been distinctly and emphatically told by our Agent on the 7th October, at Simla, that "the Ameer regarded the

Agents from Russia as sources of embarrassment."* All the authentic information which had reached the Government was consistent with this view. Our Agent at Cabul had indeed reported that on the 9th of June a messenger had come with a letter from General Kaufmann, and that this messenger had been received for half an hour, at a formal interview, by the Ameer. The letter had not then been seen by our Agent, but he believed it to be "merely a complimentary one, conveying information of the fall of Kokhand."†

The only other information in support of Lord Lytton's sweeping accusations, is a letter from a native newswriter at Candahar, who retailed, on the 9th of August, certain reports which he had got from a man who "hired out baggage-animals in Turkestan, Bokhara, and Cabul." This man, on being asked for "the news of the country," professed to retail a story which, he said, had been told him by a certain Sirdar, who, however, was now dead. The story was that this Sirdar had taken with him to Cabul, secretly, "a Russian who came from Turkestan." This Russian, it was further said, used to have secret interviews with the Ameer. Shere Ali is then represented, in the tale, as having, "a few days after the arrival" of this Russian, sent for a certain Mulla, Mushk Alam, whom he consulted about a religious war against the English. What the connexion was between a Russian Agent and the "Mulla" is not explained or even suggested.‡ This

* Ibid., Inclos. 18, p. 181. † Ibid., Inclos. 12, p. 178.
‡ Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 13, p. 178.

stupid and incoherent story, founded on the gossip of a trader in baggage-animals, and bearing on the face of it all the marks of such an origin, seems to be the only foundation for the circumstantial accusations made by the Viceroy of India against Shere Ali in the 26th paragraph of the Simla Narrative, composed when he was hotly engaged in running that Ruler down.

There is, indeed, one half-line in that paragraph which leads us to a very curious illustration of the inconsistencies and inaccuracies which are characteristic of all Lord Lytton's State Papers referring to the Afghan question. That half-line refers to the communications which had been going on from time to time for several years, between the Russian Governor-General of Turkestan and the Ameer of Cabul. It is, of course, perfectly true that General Kaufmann had sent letters to Cabul. It was just three weeks before our Cabul Agent came to Simla that the Viceroy had sent that alarmed telegram to the Secretary of State, on the 16th of September, touching the letter of General Kaufmann which had been received by the Ameer on the 14th of June. That letter had given to the Ameer a long account and explanation of the conquest of Kokhand. We have seen in a former page how Lord Lytton, in his telegram of the 16th, and still more in his relative Despatch of the 18th of September, had denounced these letters as a breach of the Agreement of Russia with us, and how the Cabinet at home had taken up this view, and, within certain limits, had acted upon it. But in order to support this view, and make it plausible, the Viceroy had been led to represent the

correspondence as one which had been always objected to by the Government of India, although they had never before formally remonstrated. The only foundation for this was that on one previous occasion Lord Northbrook had called attention to the tone of one of these letters —an instance of vigilance on the part of that Viceroy which had been entirely thrown away on her Majesty's Government, who had taken no notice whatever of his observation. But with this exception, it was entirely untrue that the Government of India had viewed the correspondence with alarm. On the contrary, as I have shown, both Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook had encouraged the Ameer to welcome those letters, and to answer them with corresponding courtesy. Suddenly, in the Simla Narrative, Lord Lytton discovers that this is the true view of the case, because he was constructing a paragraph the object of which was to set forth the errors of former Viceroys. He, therefore, not only sets forth this view of the facts, but he sets it forth with emphasis and exaggeration. He says that the Ameer, in "losing no opportunity of improving his relations with Russian authorities in Central Asia," had acted "in accordance with our own exhortations."* It is needless to say that this is in flagrant contradiction of the representation conveyed in the despatch of September 18th, 1876.† It is further interesting to observe that, in that despatch, the "baggage-animal" story about the "secret nightly conferences" between a Russian agent and the Ameer,—

* Ibid., No. 36, para. 26, p. 168.
† Central Asia, No. I. 1878, p. 83.

which reappears in the Simla Narrative as if it were an undoubted fact,—is referred to as coming from "an unofficial source of information" which the Government of India were, "of course, unable to verify."

Having now despatched—and having thus thoroughly prepared—his Agents alternately to frighten, to cajole, and to deceive the Ameer, the Viceroy proceeded on a tour to the frontier, and continued to pursue the same Imperial policy through some very remarkable proceedings. The time had come for converting Major Sandeman's mission to Khelat into the permanent occupation of Quetta. On the 22nd of October the Viceroy's Military Secretary selected a site for permanent barracks at that place. Under the pretext of disposing of Major Sandeman's escort, a detachment of Punjaub Infantry was posted there, and in no long time this force was enlarged to a small brigade of all arms. On or about the same day, the 22nd of October, Lord Lytton reached Peshawur, and a few days afterwards he gave orders for the construction of a bridge of boats at Khoshalgurh on the Indus. This bridge of boats—of which many months later, in June, 1877, the Indian Secretary of State declared he had never heard—was actually made and established in the course of a week. Officers were then sent to Tul, on the Afghan border, to inspect the ground preparatory to the establishment there of a military force. Military and commissariat stores were laid in at Kohat, and a concentration of troops was effected at Rawul Pindi. Following upon these strange and suspicious proceedings, of which no rational explanation has been

about a month later

ever given, the fussy activity of the Viceroy found employment in bribing the Maharajah of Cashmere to advance troops beyond Gilgit and towards Citval, so as to establish his authority over tribes which the Ameer of Cabul claimed as feudatories of his Kingdom. The immediate effect of all these measures combined was to make Shere Ali feel himself threatened on three different sides—on the east through Cashmere, on the south from Rawul Pindi, and on the west from Khelat. We cannot safely accept the denials of the Government that these movements were unconnected with the pressure which they were exercising on the Ameer. But it is at least extremely probable they had also a larger purpose. At this very time the firmness of the Emperor of Russia at Livadia was confounding all the feeble and dilatory pleas of the English Cabinet. It is highly probable that at least some members of that Cabinet were seriously contemplating a war with Russia both in Europe and in Asia, for the purpose of maintaining in Europe the corrupt government of Turkey. The military preparations of the Viceroy may very probably have been due to personal instructions to prepare for an attack upon Russia in Central Asia—in which attack Afghanistan would have been used as a base. Under any supposition the Ameer was threatened.

Let us now return to Cabul, and see what was passing there.

Our Agent returned to that capital in the end of October, 1876. The consultations and deliberations which were held by the Ameer lasted two months—that

is, till the end of December. Lord Lytton says, in the Simla Narrative, that the Ameer evinced a desire to gain time. Of course he did ; that is to say, he wished to delay as long as possible coming to a decision which placed before him the alternatives of sacrificing finally the friendship of the British Government, as well as all the promises, written and verbal, which had been given him by former Viceroys,—or of submitting to proposals which, as he and all his advisers firmly believed, involved the sacrifice of his independence. Lord Lytton again says that he was evidently waiting for the war which was likely to break out between Russia and England, in order that he might sell his alliance to the most successful, or to the highest bidder. There is not a scrap of evidence in support of this view, as a matter of fact, and it is in the highest degree improbable as a matter of speculation. Shere Ali was far too shrewd a man to suppose that his alliance would be of much practical value to either party in such a contest. The whole idea is evolved out of Lord Lytton's inner consciousness. There is plenty of evidence that both the Viceroy and his official chiefs were all thinking of Russia and of nothing else. There is no evidence whatever that Shere Ali was thinking of them at all. There were, of course, plenty more of those rumours about Russian agents at Cabul which belong to the "baggage-animal" class. But such direct and authentic evidence as we have is to this effect —that the Ameer and his Durbar, and his Chiefs whom he consulted, were engrossed by one prevailing fear—that the violent conduct, threatening language, and im-

perious demands of the British Government, indicated a design to assume complete dominion in their country. So strong is this evidence that Lord Lytton is compelled to try to damage it, and accordingly he does not scruple to hint that Atta Mohammed Khan, our native Agent, who had for many years enjoyed the confidence of former Viceroys, was unfaithful to the Government he had so long served. In the 29th paragraph of the Simla Narrative, in reference to the delays which the Ameer had interposed on the ground of health, Lord Lytton complains that the Vakeel had accepted the excuse "either through stupidity or disloyalty." Again, he says that the reports of our Agent had become "studiously infrequent, vague, and unintelligible." This is an assertion which is not borne out—which, indeed, is directly contradicted—by the papers which have been presented to Parliament. The letters of Atta Mohammed range from the 23rd of November* to the 25th of December† inclusive, and, during a period of less than a month, the number of them was no less than eight. Nor is it at all true that they are vague or unintelligible. On the contrary, they convey a very vivid and graphic account of the condition of things which it was the business of our Agent to describe. The picture presented is one of distracted counsels, and of a sincere desire not to break with the powerful Government which was already violating its own promises, and was threatening a weak State with further injustice. Of course these letters of

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 26, p. 192.
† Ibid., Inclos. 33, p. 194.

Atta Mohammed were not pleasant reading for Lord Lytton, and it is, perhaps, natural that he should disparage them.* But no impartial man who reads them can fail to see that they convey a very much more correct impression of the facts than the haphazard assertions and reckless accusations of the Viceroy. In particular, the very first of these letters, in its very brevity, is eminently instructive. It describes a sort of Cabinet Council to which the Agent was admitted, and its general result. That result was that the Government of Afghanistan was not in a position to receive British officers within the frontiers of that State; and the Agent adds, with great descriptive power, "The contemplation of such an arrangement filled them with apprehension."† Again, in the two letters dated December 21st, the Ameer is reported—in observations which described only too faithfully the hasty and excited action of the Government of India towards him—to have expressed the natural apprehensions with which this action inspired him, and the difficulty of so defining and limiting the duties of British Agents as really to prevent them from interfering in the government of his Kingdom. These accounts are perfectly clear, rational, and consistent, and the unjust account which is given of them by the Viceroy seems to be

* It is a curious comment on this most unjustifiable attack by the Viceroy on the character of Atta Mohammed Khan, that on the 13th of October, at the close of the last of the Conferences with him Lord Lytton had presented him with a watch and chain, as well as 10,000 rupees, "in acknowledgment of the appreciation of the Government of his past faithful service." See Ibid., p. 185.

† Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 26, p. 192.

simply the result of the fretful irritation with which the Viceroy regarded every opposition to, or even remonstrance with, his new "Imperial Policy."

At last, towards the close of December, 1876, the Ameer, frightened by the threats of the Viceroy, and plied by the urgency of our Agent,—half-forced to accept the hated basis, and half-hoping to be still able to escape from it,—made up his mind to send his old confidential Minister, Noor Mohammed, to meet Sir Lewis Pelly at Peshawur. In the 29th paragraph of the Simla Narrative, it is a comfort to find at least one little bit of fair statement. We are there told that "the Ameer, finding himself unable to evade any longer the issue put to him, without bringing his relations with us to an open rupture, dispatched his Minister." So much for the assertions, made more than once afterwards, that the Ameer had sought the Conferences, and had volunteered to send his Minister. The Conferences began on the 30th of January, 1877.

Let us now look back for a moment at the result of the transactions which we have traced.

First, we have the Secretary of State for India describing, and, by implication, disparaging, the assurances given to the Ameer by former Viceroys, as "ambiguous formulas." *

Secondly, we have the same Minister instructing the new Viceroy that a dynastic guarantee need be nothing more than "the frank recognition of a *de facto* order in

---

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 35, Inclos. para. 15, p. 158.

the succession established by a *de facto* Government;" and that this "does not imply or necessitate any intervention in the internal affairs of that State." *

Thirdly, we have like instructions with regard to the other guarantees which had been desired by the Ameer, and which were all to be framed on the same principle—namely, that of the British Government "reserving to themselves entire freedom of judgment as to the character of circumstances involving the obligation of material support to the Ameer."†

Fourthly, we have the Viceroy preparing, very elaborately, a "Draft Treaty,"‡ and a "Subsidiary Secret and Explanatory Agreement,"§ for carrying into effect the instructions and suggestions of the Secretary of State; this being done by Articles so full of qualifying words, and so beset with saving clauses, that the Government did indeed effectually reserve to itself the most "entire freedom" under every conceivable circumstance, to give, or not to give, to the Ameer the assistance of which he desired to be assured.

Fifthly, we have the fact that both the Secretary of State and the Viceroy had before them authoritative documents proving that guarantees or assurances of this kind, which were not only conditional, but wholly made up of conditions within conditions, were not the kind of guarantee or of assurance which the Ameer had asked for

---

* Ibid., para. 16.
† Ibid., para. 24, p. 159.
‡ Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 24, p. 189.
§ Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 25, p. 191.

in 1869, and which he had ever since continued to desire.*

Sixthly, we have the fact that this Draft Treaty, with its intricate network of saving clauses, was not to be shown to the Ameer till after he had accepted the Viceroy's basis; or, in other words, till he had conceded to the British Government all it wanted.

Seventhly, we have the fact that the Viceroy endeavoured, in the meantime, by every device in his power, down even to the abuse of private friendship, to persuade the Ameer that the British Government was now offering to him conditions "in every particular the same as those desired by the Ameer himself on the occasion of his visit to Umballa in 1869, and again, in more or less general terms, so urged by him on the Government of India through his Minister, Noor Mohammed Khan, in 1873." †

Eighthly, we have the fact that the Viceroy, through the letter of Captain Grey to Noor Mohammed, tried still farther to enhance the value of his own offers by contrasting them with the "vacillation" of former Governments, both in India and at home; which vacillation he ascribed to the absence of a Treaty, and to the consequent "unfettered discretion" retained by Ministers and Viceroys.‡

Lastly, we have the same Viceroy writing home to the

---

* Ibid., No. 19, paras. 9, 10, 11 and 45, pp. 93, 94, 96; also, Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 18, p. 182.

† Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 23, p. 187.

‡ Afghan Corresp., II., No. 3, pp. 9, 10.

Secretary of State that the concessions which that Minister had sanctioned, and which he himself had offered to the Ameer, "would not practically commit the British Government to anything more than a formal re-affirmation of the assurances already given by it, through Lord Mayo, to the Ameer in 1869."*

These transactions are but a fitting introduction to those which follow. If General Kaufmann had been detected in such a course of diplomacy towards any of the Khans of Central Asia, we know what sort of language would have been applied to it, and justly applied to it, in England.

---

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 36, para. 27, p. 168.

CHAPTER V.

FROM THE PESHAWUR CONFERENCE IN JANUARY, 1877, TO THE WAR IN NOVEMBER, 1878.

THE great object of the British Envoy, from the first moment of the negotiations at Peshawur, was to fix upon the Ameer the position of an applicant for a new Treaty, in consequence of his dissatisfaction with the previous engagements of the British Government. Assuming him to occupy that position, it was easy to represent the new stipulations which he so much dreaded as necessary and natural conditions of what he desired.

It will be observed that this misrepresentation of the relative position of the two parties in the negotiation was part of the Viceroy's plan. His difficulty was this—that the British Government wanted to get something from the Ameer, whereas the Ameer did not want to get anything from the British Government, knowing, as he did, the price he would have to pay for it. The Viceroy felt the awkwardness of this position, and he determined to get over it, if he could, by the very simple experiment of pretending that the facts were otherwise. In the 27th paragraph* of the Simla Narrative we have this policy

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 36, p. 168.

explained under forms of language which but thinly veil its terrible unfairness. "The Ameer's apparent object was to place the British Government in the position of a petitioner; and that position it behoved the British Government to reverse." Yes,—if it could be done with truth. But the process of "reversing" facts is an awkward process. Sir Lewis Pelly did his best. He began at once by pretending that it was the Ameer, and not the British Government, who was desirous of some new arrangement.

Against this representation of the facts, from the first moments of the Conference, Noor Mohammed resolutely contended. He had one great advantage. Truth was on his side. The Ameer had, indeed, at one time wanted to get some things which had been refused him. But he had got other things which he still more highly valued, and he knew that the great aim of this new Viceroy was to get him to sacrifice what former Viceroys had granted, without really giving him what they had refused. The contention, therefore, that Shere Ali wanted this new Treaty, and was dissatisfied with the pledges he had already received from the British Government, was a contention not in accordance with the facts. Noor Mohammed saw at once the true aspect of the case, and the fallacious pretexts which were put forward by Sir Lewis Pelly. The very foremost of these was a reference to the desires which Shere Ali had at first intimated at Umballa, but which he had abandoned before he quitted the presence of Lord Mayo. The Cabul Envoy would not hear of the allegation that the Ameer was dissatisfied

with the promises of his old and firm friends, Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo, and that the engagements of those Viceroys had any need of being supplemented by the new proposals of Lord Lytton. He repelled with firmness every suggestion, every insinuation, every argument to this effect. It is, indeed, impossible not to admire the ability and the dignity with which Noor Mohammed, whilst labouring under a fatal and a painful disease, fought this battle of truth and justice,—in what he considered to be the interests of his master and the independence of his country.

From the first he took very high ground. At a private and unofficial meeting with the British Envoy on the 3rd of February, Sir Lewis Pelly said, on parting, that it would depend on the Ameer whether the Afghan Envoy's departure should prove as happy as he desired. The Afghan replied, "No, it depends on you;" and then, correcting himself, he added, with a higher and better pride, "In truth, it depends neither on you nor on the Ameer, but on justice."* And yet, when speaking as a private individual, he did not shrink from admitting the dependent position of his Sovereign on account of the comparative weakness of his country. "Your Government," he said, at the close of the first meeting, to Sir Lewis Pelly, "is a great and powerful one: ours is a small and weak one. We have long been on terms of friendship, and the Ameer now clings to the skirt of the British Government, and till his hand be cut off he will not

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 37, p. 198.

relax his hold of it."* But when speaking as the Envoy of the Ameer, and conducting the negotiations on his behalf, he spoke with a power and force which evidently caused great embarrassment to his opponent. Some of his simple questions must have been cutting to the quick. Thus, at the meeting on the 5th of February, he asked, "But if this Viceroy should make an agreement, and a successor should say, 'I am not bound by it?'" On this a remarkable scene occurred. The British Envoy, not liking apparently so direct a question, began to reply indirectly. Noor Mohammed at once interrupted—feeling, as he had a right to feel, that however inferior his master might be in power, he was the equal of the Viceroy in this contest of argument. The Afghan Envoy said he "wanted Yes or No." The British Envoy took refuge in evasion: "With the permission of the Afghan Envoy he would make his own remarks in the manner which might appear to him to be proper." Again, Noor Mohammed asked, "Whether all the Agreements and Treaties, from the time of Sir John Lawrence and the late Ameer, up to the time of Lord Northbrook and the present Ameer, are invalid and annulled?"† And, again, when Sir Lewis Pelly had replied that he had no authority to annul any Treaty, but to propose a supplementary Treaty to those already existing, the Afghan Envoy asked, "Supposing the present Viceroy makes a Treaty with us, and twenty years after he has gone, another Viceroy says he wishes to revise and supplement

---

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 35, p. 197. † Ibid., Inclos. 38, p. 199.

it, what are we to do?" To these home-thrusts Sir Lewis Pelly could only reply by insisting on the pretext that it was the Ameer who had expressed dissatisfaction —a reply which Noor Mohammed had no difficulty in disposing of by telling the British Envoy that if the Ameer was dissatisfied, it was "owing to transgression of previous agreements."* Again and again he repudiated any wish on the part of the Ameer to have a new Treaty. He had "returned from Umballa without anxiety."†

At last, having maintained this contest with admirable spirit for several days, Noor Mahommed intimated that he desired an opportunity of setting forth his master's views in one continuous statement, during which he was not to be interrupted. Accordingly, this speech of the Afghan Envoy began on the 8th of February. The exhaustion of anxiety and of disease compelled him twice to stop, and to resume on another day. His statement, therefore, extended over three meetings, beginning on the 8th and ending on the 12th of February, 1877.

In this long argument he took his stand at once on the firm ground of claiming fidelity to the former engagements of the British Government. "If the authorities of the British Government have a regard for their own promises, and act upon them with sincerity, in accordance with the customary friendship which was formerly, and is now" (what courtesy!) "observed between the two

---

* Ibid., Inclos. 38, p. 199. † Ibid., p. 200.

Governments, there is no ground for any anxiety."* He cut off the pretext, which has since been repeated, both in the Simla Narrative and in its fellow, the London Narrative, that the Ameer had shown his desire to get some new Treaty, by sending his Envoy to meet Lord Northbrook in 1873. He reminded Sir Lewis Pelly that it was not the Ameer, but the Viceroy, who had sought that meeting. He repeated this twice, and asked, "The wishes, therefore, on whose part were they?" He objected to the garbled extracts which had been quoted to prove his master's dissatisfaction, and spoke with censure of "one paragraph of many paragraphs being brought forward" to support erroneous interpretations. At great length, and with much earnestness, he contended that the Ameer had been satisfied by Lord Northbrook's confirmation of the assurances and promises of Lord Lawrence and of Lord Mayo, quoted a letter from the Ameer to this effect, and concluded an elaborate explanation on the subject by these words: "Therefore, till the time of the departure of Lord Northbrook, that previous course continued to be observed."† The only complaint he made of that Viceroy was his subsequent intercession on behalf of Yakoob Khan. But, so far as regarded the assurances and engagements of the British Government, he wanted nothing in addition to those which had been concluded with Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo.

On the third day of his laborious statement, the Cabul

---

* Ibid., Inclos. 41, p. 203. † Ibid., No. 42, p. 206.

Envoy entered upon the question of questions—that of the reception of British officers. Here, again, he took his stand on the Treaty of 1857, and on the promises of Lord Mayo. He deprecated a course which would "scatter away former assurances." He declared that the people of Afghanistan "had a dread of this proposal, and it is firmly fixed in their minds, and deeply rooted in their hearts, that if Englishmen, or other Europeans, once set foot in their country, it will sooner or later pass out of their hands."* He referred to the explanations given by the father of the present Ameer to Sir John Lawrence, and to the engagements of the Treaties of 1855 and of 1857. He referred to the ostensible object put forward by the British Envoy, that he wished to remove anxiety from the mind of the Ameer, and he asked whether the new proposals would not raise fresh anxiety, not only in his mind, but in the mind of all his people,† and he concluded by a solemn appeal to the British Government not to raise a question which would "abrogate the former Treaties and Agreements, and the past usage."‡

In reply to these arguments, Sir Lewis Pelly, on the 13th of February, reminded the Ameer that, although the Treaty of 1855 was still in force, and would be observed if no revised Treaty could be made, it did not bind the British Government to aid the Ameer against his enemies, whether foreign or domestic. If, therefore,

---

* Ibid., No. 43, p. 208.

† Ibid., p. 208. ‡ Ibid., p. 209.

the Ameer rejected the present offers, the Viceroy would "decline to support the Ameer and his dynasty in any troubles, internal or external," and would "continue to strengthen the frontier of British India, without further reference to the Ameer, in order to provide against probable contingencies." *

It will be observed that this argument and intimation pointed very plainly to two things—first, to the fact that the British Envoy acknowledged no engagement or pledge to be binding except the Treaty of 1855. The pledges of Lord Lawrence, of Lord Mayo, and of Lord Northbrook were all treated as so much waste paper, or as still more wasted breath. And, secondly, that the British Government considered itself at liberty to threaten adverse measures on the frontier. Noor Mohammed at once took alarm at both these intimations—asked what the last meant, and referred to the Treaty of 1857 as also binding. Sir Lewis Pelly gave replies that can only be considered as evasive. He declined to give definite explanations on either point. †

At the meeting on the 19th of February, the Afghan Envoy gave his rejoinder on the subject of the British officers in Afghanistan. He again referred to the promises of Lord Mayo. And as regarded the danger of any external aggression from Russia, he referred to the Agreement between England and Russia, and the formal

---

* Ibid., p. 210.

† This intimation by Sir L. Pelly looks very like a pre-determination to rectify our "hap-hazard frontier" by picking a quarrel. It is not easy to see what other meaning it can have had.

and official communication which had been made to the Ameer upon that subject by the British Government. He insisted that, as regarded the obligations of the British Government, it was not fair to quote the Treaty of 1855 as standing by itself. It must be read in connexion with the writings and verbal assurances of three successive Viceroys, and in connexion also with the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857. That Article was of surviving force, and it required that any British Agent sent to Cabul should not be an European. The Government of Afghanistan would "never in any manner consent to acknowledge the abrogation of that Article." But all these engagements were not to be read separately, but as connected one with the other. "They are one," said the Envoy.* They constituted one continued series of engagements. He was very glad to hear of the desire of the Viceroy for the advantage of the Ameer. But it was "based upon such new and hard conditions, especially the residence of British officers upon the frontiers." Not once, but many times in the course of this Conference, the Afghan Envoy specified this demand—and not any demand for an Envoy at Cabul—as the one which he considered dangerous and objectionable. He said the Ameer had "not entrusted the protection of those frontiers from an external enemy to the English Government."

Sir Lewis Pelly had said that if the Ameer rejected his demand as to British officers, no basis was left for

* Ibid., p. 212.

negotiations. In reference to this, "I beg to observe," said the Afghan, "in a friendly and frank manner, that the basis which has been laid for you by the wise arrangement of previous Councillors and Ministers of Her Majesty the Queen of England in London, of Her Viceroys in India, after mature deliberation and thought, from time to time, during the course of all these past years, and has been approved of by Her Majesty the Queen, still exists." . . . . "The Government of Afghanistan is certain that the British Government, of its own perfect honesty, will continue constant and stable to that firm basis."*

This was hard hitting. But it was hard hitting delivered with such perfect courtesy, that no just offence could be taken. But besides this, it was irrefutable argument. Sir Lewis Pelly had to take refuge in the coarse expedient which was alone possible under the circumstances, and which was alone consistent with his instructions. His basis was not accepted, and he declined to enter into controversy. He did, however, try to frighten the Ameer about Russia by asking the Envoy whether he had considered the conquests of Russia in the direction of Khiva, Bokhara, Kokhand, and the Turkoman border. He reminded Noor Mohammed (and this was fair enough) of the former expressions he had made use of in respect to apprehensions of Russia. He then declared "England has no reason to fear Russia." Noor Mohammed must have put his own estimate on the sin-

* Ibid., p. 213.

cerity of this declaration. He could not have put a lower one than it deserved. But as Sir Lewis Pelly had nothing to reply to the weighty arguments Noor Mohammed had used, and to the appeals to honourable feeling which he had made, the Afghan begged that they should be reported to the Viceroy, submitted to his consideration, and referred to his written decision. The Envoy would then be prepared either to give a final answer or to refer to the Ameer for further instructions.

It was not till the 15th of March—an interval of nearly a month—that Sir Lewis Pelly replied to the Afghan Envoy. This reply, I am afraid, must be considered as the reply of the Viceroy, as it is drawn up professedly upon his written instructions. It is very difficult to give any adequate account of this document: of its rude language—of its unfair representations of the Afghan Envoy's argument—of its evasive dealing with Treaties—of its insincere professions—of its insulting tone. There are, indeed, some excuses for the Viceroy. Brought up in the school of British Diplomacy, he must have felt himself beaten by a man whom he considered a Barbarian. This Barbarian had seen through his "ostensible pretexts," and his ambiguous promises. He had not, indeed, seen the Draft Treaty with its labyrinth of Saving Clauses. But our Agent at Cabul had been told enough to let Noor Mahommed understand what kind of a Treaty would probably be proposed. He had not been deceived by the letter of Captain Grey. The Afghan Minister had challenged, with only too much truth, the shifty way in which the Viceroy dealt with the good faith of the British

Crown, and the pledged word of former Viceroys. He had even dared to tell Lord Lytton's Envoy that he expected a plain answer to a plain question—Yes or No—whether he admitted himself to be bound by the pledges of his predecessors in office? He had done all this with the greatest acuteness, and with perfect dignity. All this was, no doubt, very hard to bear. But if irritation was natural, it was in the highest degree unworthy of the British Government to allow such irritation to be seen. If the Viceroy really considered the conduct of the Ameer, as then known or reported to him, as deserving or calling for the manifestation of such a spirit, it would have been far better to have no Conference at all. So far as the official language and conduct of the Ameer was concerned there was nothing to complain of. The language of his Envoy was in the highest degree courteous and dignified; and if Lord Lytton could not bear the severe reproaches which undoubtedly were of necessity involved in that Afghan's exposure of the Viceroy's case, it would have been better to avoid a contest in which the British Crown is represented at such signal disadvantage. Let us, however, examine the answer of the Viceroy a little nearer.

The impression which the Viceroy says he has derived from the first part of the Envoy's statement is an impression of regret that the Ameer should feel himself precluded from receiving a British Envoy at his Court, "by the rude and stationary condition in which Afghanistan had remained under the administration of his Highness." Returning to this charge, the Viceroy adds that the

"unsettled and turbulent condition of the Afghan population, and the comparative weakness of the sovereign power, however, appear to have increased rather than diminished, under the reign of his Highness."* Not only was this a gratuitous insult, even if it had been true, but it was an insult in support of which the Viceroy produced no evidence, because, as I believe, he had no evidence to produce.

The first approach to argument in reply to the Afghan Envoy is an assertion that the 7th clause of the Treaty of 1857 has "nothing whatever to do with the matters now under consideration."† This, however, is mere assertion—no attempt is made to support it. It is an assertion, moreover, wholly inconsistent with the facts, and one which, as we shall presently see, it became necessary to retract.

The next assertion is that the Envoy had taken "so many pains to explain the reasons why the Ameer still declined to receive a British officer at Cabul," and had at the same time as "carefully avoided all references to the reception of British officers in other parts of Afghanistan." For this assertion there is absolutely no foundation whatever. The Afghan Envoy had not only repeatedly stated his objections as referring to the whole country of Afghanistan, but in the able argument of Noor Mohammed on the 19th February, which Lord Lytton was now professing to answer, and which it concerned the honour of the Crown that he should answer with some tolerable

---

* Ibid., p. 214. † Ibid., p. 215.

fairness, the Afghan Envoy had at least seven times specified the residence of British officers "on the frontiers" as the "chief proposal of the British Government."* Sir Lewis Pelly had, with equal precision, referred to this demand as the one to which the Envoy had objected.

The next assertion is that the British Government had been induced to believe both from events, and from many previous utterances both of Shere Ali and his father, that the advantages of British Residents in his dominions "would be cordially welcomed and gratefully appreciated by his Highness." Can anybody maintain that this is true? Is this a fair representation of the facts, even if Captain Grey's private memorandum-book be accepted as the only faithful record of Umballa?

The next assertion is that if the Ameer was unwilling, "the British Government had not the slightest desire to urge upon an unwilling neighbour an arrangement so extremely onerous to itself." Not content with this, the Viceroy goes the length of declaring that "the proposal of this arrangement was regarded by the British Government as a great concession."† Again, I ask, was this true? Could it be said with any sincerity? Was it consistent with the despatches and instructions which have been examined in the preceding narrative?

Next we have a repetition of the unfounded assertion that the Envoy had elaborately answered a proposal which the British Government had not made, "and which he had no right to attribute to it," whilst he had

---

* Ibid., Inclos. 45, pp. 211-213. † Ibid., p. 216.

left altogether unnoticed those proposals which alone he had been authorised to discuss.

The Viceroy has great difficulty in dealing with the telling and dignified passage of Noor Mohammed's speech in which he referred to existing obligations as the true basis for all further negotiations. Lord Lytton could only say that the existing Treaties being old, and not having been disputed by either party, afforded "no basis whatever for further negotiation." This was in direct contradiction with Sir Lewis Pelly's language at the previous meetings, in which he had spoken of the new Treaty as a supplement to those already existing. At the meeting held on the 5th of February, Sir Lewis Pelly had expressly declared that his authority was to propose "to revise and supplement the Treaty of 1855."*

The Viceroy then went on to say that if there was to be no new Treaty, the two Governments "must revert to their previous relative positions."† But as the Ameer seemed to misunderstand what that position was, Sir Lewis Pelly was instructed to remove a "dangerous misconception" from his mind. For this purpose he repeats at length the previous argument on the Treaty of 1855, that whilst it did bind the Ameer to be the friend of our friends, and the enemy of our enemies, it did not place the British Government under any obligation to render any assistance whatever to the Ameer. He then accumulates against the Ameer charges of unfriendliness, founded on the non-reception of Envoys, on ingratitude

* Ibid., p. 199. † Ibid., p. 216.

for subsidies, on refusals to let officers pass through his country, on alleged intentions of aggression on his neighbours, and, finally, on the reported attempt of the Ameer to get up a religious war. Some of these accusations mean nothing more than that the Ameer had stuck to the engagements of Lord Mayo. Others were founded on mere rumour, and the last referred to, was conduct on the part of the Ameer which was the direct result of Lord Lytton's own violent conduct towards him, and which had been quite well known to the Viceroy before this Conference began.

The Viceroy then comes again to the Treaty of 1857, and is at last compelled to admit that the 7th Article is "the only one of all its articles that has reference to the conduct of general relations between the two Governments."* As, in a previous paragraph, he had said that the Treaty of 1857 had "nothing whatever to do with the matters now under consideration;" and in another paragraph that the obligations contracted under it had "lapsed, as a matter of course, with the lapse of time,"† this was an important admission. But the Viceroy gets out of it by evading the force of the 7th Article altogether, through a construction of its meaning wholly different from the true one. The force of the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857 lies in this—that it stipulates for the complete withdrawal, not from Cabul, but from the whole of the Ameer's country, of "British officers," after the temporary purpose for which they were sent there

* Ibid., p. 217. † Ibid., pp. 215, 216.

had been accomplished. It is, therefore, a record of the permanent policy of the Rulers of Afghanistan not to admit British officers as Residents in any part of it, and a record also of the acquiescence of the British Government in that policy.

It is hardly credible, but it is the fact, that the Viceroy proceeds to argue on this Article as if it referred only to the reception of a British Envoy at the Capital—at Cabul itself. It almost looks as if the whole paper had been written without even looking at original documents—even so very short and simple an Instrument as the Treaty of 1857. "It is obvious," continues the Viceroy, "that no Treaty stipulation was required to oblige the British Government not to appoint a Resident British officer at Cabul without the consent of the Ameer."* In the same vein Lord Lytton proceeds to argue that it could not bind the Ameer never at any future time or under any circumstances "to assent to the appointment of a Resident British officer at Cabul." All this is absolutely irrelevant, and has, to use his own previous words, "nothing whatever to do with the matters now under consideration."

The Viceroy then adds one argument which, I think, is sound, if strictly limited—namely, this, that there is nothing in the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857 "to preclude the British Government from pointing out at any time to the Ameer the advantage, or propriety, of receiving a British officer as its permanent Representative

* Ibid., p. 217.

at Cabul, nor even from urging such an arrangement upon the consideration and adoption of his Highness in any fair and friendly manner."* Not only is this true, but I go farther and say that there is nothing even in the later pledges and engagements of Lord Mayo and of Lord Northbrook with the Ameer to prevent this kind of conduct. But the injustice of the conduct of Lord Lytton lay in this—that he was trying to force a new policy on the Ameer in a manner which was neither "fair nor friendly"—but, to use his own words, under threats of an "open rupture." We had, of course, a right to argue with the Ameer, and to persuade him, if we could, to let us off from our engagements. But what we had no right to do was precisely that which Lord Lytton had done and was then doing—namely, to threaten him with our displeasure if he did not agree to our new demands—and to support this threat with the most unjust evasions of the written and verbal pledges of former Viceroys.

But the Viceroy had not yet done with his strange perversion of the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857. He again assumes that it refers to the reception of an Envoy at Cabul. He says, tauntingly, that "it so happened that the British Government had not proposed, and did not propose, or intend to propose, that arrangement. Consequently, his Excellency's (the Cabul Envoy's) remarks on the Treaty of 1857 were not to the point, and did not need to be further noticed."†

Having thus got rid by misquotations of the real force

---

* Ibid., p. 218. † Ibid., p. 218.

and direct language of the Treaties of 1855 and of 1857, the Viceroy proceeds to declare broadly that "neither the one nor the other imposes on the British Government, either directly or indirectly, the least obligation or liability whatever, to defend, protect, or support the Ameer, or the Ameer's dynasty, against any enemy or any danger, foreign or domestic."

Lord Lytton next proceeds to deal with the pledges of preceding Viceroys. He refers to these as "certain written and verbal assurances received by the Ameer in 1869, from Lord Mayo, and by his Highness's Envoy in 1873, from Lord Northbrook." He thus starts at once the distinction between Treaty engagements and the formal promises of the representative of the Crown in India. But he does more than this. This would not have been enough for the purposes of his argument.

It was necessary not only to put a new gloss on the promises of the British Government, but also to put a special interpretation on the claims of the Ameer. At the Simla Conferences, indeed, in 1873, the Ameer had shown a disposition to put an over-strained interpretation on previous promises. But Lord Northbrook had fully explained all the conditions and limitations which had uniformly been attached to them. Noor Mohammed, who now argued the case of the Ameer, was the same Envoy to whom these explanations had been addressed, and in the able and temperate representation which he had now made of his master's views he had made no extravagant claims whatever. It was this representation to which Lord Lytton was now replying, and he had no

right to go back upon former misunderstandings, which had been cleared up, and to assume that they were still cherished by the Ameer. The Afghan Envoy had made no extravagant claim. This constituted Lord Lytton's difficulty. It would have been very difficult indeed to make out that the promises and pledges of Lord Lawrence, of Lord Mayo, and of Lord Northbrook, taking them even at the lowest value, did not imply, directly or indirectly, "the least obligation to defend, to protect, or support" the Ameer. But it was very easy, of course, to make out that they did not promise him an "unconditional support." At first, as we have seen, it had been Lord Lytton's object to fix on the Ameer a condition of discontent because Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook had not given him assurances enough. It now became convenient to represent him, on the contrary, as so over-estimating those assurances as to claim them as having been unconditional. Accordingly, this representation of the facts is quietly substituted for the other, and the Ameer is assumed as having claimed this "unconditional support," which he had not claimed, and about which there had not been one word said in the whole course of Noor Mohammed's pleadings—except a single incidental observation*—the purport of which is not very clear, and which, if it had been noticed at all, should have been noticed as incidentally as it arose.

Having effected this substitution of the case to be proved and of the claim to be met, Lord Lytton proceeds at great

* Ibid., p. 206.

length to argue from the circumstances under which the previous Viceroys had given their promises, that, in the first place, "these utterances," "whatever their meaning, and whatever their purpose," were not "intended to have the force of a Treaty," and, in the second place, that they did not "commit the British Government to an unconditional protection of the Ameer." Having estabished this last proposition to his heart's content, he finds himself confronted with the task of describing what all the previous promises had meant and had amounted to. And here, at last, there is a gleam of fairness, like the sun shining for a moment through a thick bank of stormy clouds. They amounted, says the Viceroy, to neither more nor less than this:—"An assurance that, so long as the Ameer continued to govern his people justly and mercifully, and to maintain frank, cordial, and confidential relations with the British Government, that Government would, on its part also, continue to use every legitimate endeavour to confirm the independence, consolidate the power, and strengthen the Government of his Highness."*

The value, however, of this gleam of candour is much diminished by two circumstances, which are proved by the context. In the first place, the binding force of this "assurance" was destroyed by the careful explanation that it was not equivalent to a Treaty obligation. In the second place, it was implied that the refusal of the Ameer to accept the new condition of Resident British officers was in itself a departure from the "frank, cordial, and

* Ibid., p. 218.

confidential relations" which were represented to be among the conditions of the "assurance." The first of these circumstances, as affecting the Viceroy's definition, deprived the "assurance" of all value; whilst the second was in itself a direct breach of that assurance, inasmuch as the whole essence of them lay in the promise that the reception of British officers was not to be forced or pressed upon the Ameer by threats and punishments of this kind.

Lord Lytton next returns to the plan of representing the Ameer as disappointed at Simla by Lord Northbrook's refusal to give to him a Treaty, and argues that the "verbal assurances" of that Viceroy could not be interpreted as assuming in favour of the Ameer those very liabilities which had been refused in the Treaty. Of course not; and Noor Mohammed had never made any such allegation.

The Viceroy then proceeds to represent himself as simply the giver of all good things—as offering to the Ameer what he had vainly solicited from others. Not very consistently with this, he refers to the acceptance of his conditions as a proof of "sincerity" on the part of the Ameer, thus admitting, by implication, that their acceptance was an object of desire to the British Government. And yet, not to let this admission stand, he declares that the "British Government does not press its alliance and protection upon those who neither seek nor appreciate them." The Viceroy then retires in a tone of offended dignity, and of mortified benevolence. He harboured "no hostile designs against Afghanistan."

He had "no conceivable object, and certainly no desire to interfere in their domestic affairs." The British Government would scrupulously continue to respect the Ameer's authority and independence. But in the last sentence there is a sting. The promise it contains is carefully, designedly, limited to "Treaty stipulations," which, in the opinion of Lord Lytton, did not include the most solemn written and verbal pledges of the representatives of the Crown in India. So long as the Ameer remained faithful to "Treaty stipulations" which the Envoy had referred to, "and which the British Government fully recognised as still valid, and therefore binding upon the two contracting parties," he "need be under no apprehension whatever of any hostile action on the part of the British Government."*

It is not difficult to imagine the feelings with which the Envoy of the unfortunate Ameer must have received this communication of the Viceroy. He must have felt—as every unprejudiced man must feel who reads it—that he was dealing with a Government very powerful and very unscrupulous,—too angry and too hot in the pursuit of its own ends to quote, with even tolerable fairness, the case which he had put before it,—and determined at any cost to force concessions which he and his Sovereign were convinced must end in the destruction of the independence of their country. During the month he had been waiting for the answer of the Viceroy, his sickness had been increasing. When he did get it, he probably

* Ibid., p. 220.

felt under the heavy responsibility of finally deciding whether he was to yield or not. His master, who had probably been kept informed of the tone and of the demands of Sir Lewis Pelly, had become more and more incensed by the treatment he was receiving, and he was acting as most men do when they are driven to the wall. Noor Mohammed made some despairing attempts to reopen the discussion with Sir Lewis Pelly. But that Envoy told him that his orders were imperative to treat no more unless the "basis" were accepted. "The Viceroy's communication" (with all its misquotations) "required only a simple Yes or No." Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that within ten days of the receipt of the Viceroy's message, Noor Mohammed had "gained time" in another world. The Cabul Envoy died on the 26th of March.

And now a very remarkable transaction occurred, the knowledge of which we derive and derive only from the Simla Narrative.* It appears that the Ameer, either after hearing of the death of his old Minister, or from knowing that he was extremely ill, had determined to send another Envoy to Peshawur, and it was reported to the Viceroy that this Envoy would have authority to accept eventually all the conditions of the British Government. Lord Lytton himself tells us that he knew all this before the 30th of March; on which day he sent a hasty telegram to Sir Lewis Pelly to "close the Conference immediately," on the ground that the basis

* Ibid., No. 36, para. 36, pp. 170, 171.

had not been accepted. And so eager was the Viceroy to escape from any chance of being caught even in the wily offers which he had made to the Ameer, that it was specially added in the telegram that if new Envoys or messengers had arrived in the meantime, the refusal of farther negotiations was still to be rigidly maintained.* The ostensible reason given for this determination is not very clear or intelligible. It is that "liabilities which the British Government might properly have contracted on behalf of the present Ameer of Cabul, if that Prince had shown any eagerness to deserve and reciprocate its friendship, could not be advantageously, or even safely, accepted in face of the situation revealed by Sir Lewis Pelly's energetic investigations." That is to say, that, having driven the Ameer into hostility of feeling by demands which had all along been known to be most distasteful, and even dreadful, in his sight, the Viceroy was now determined to take advantage of this position of affairs, not only to withdraw all the boons he had professed to offer, but to retire with the great advantage of having shaken off, like the dust of his feet, even the solemn pledges and promises which the Ameer had obtained from former Viceroys. There was another result of this proceeding which Lord Lytton seems to admit that he foresaw, and which, from the language in which he refers to it, he does not seem to have regarded with any regret. That result was that Shere Ali would be thrown of necessity into the arms of Russia. "Seeing,"

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 52, p. 222.

says Lord Lytton, "no immediate prospect of further support from the British Government, and fearing, perhaps, the consequences of its surmised resentment, he would naturally become more urgent in his advances towards Russia."* This, therefore, was the acknowledged result of the policy of the Government—a result which the Viceroy was not ashamed to acknowledge as one which he regarded, if not with satisfaction, at least with indifference. This feeling could only arise, so far as I can see, from a deliberate desire to fix a quarrel on the Ameer, and then to obtain by violence the objects which he had failed to secure by the proceedings we have now traced.

One important circumstance connected with the conduct and policy of the Viceroy at this moment does not appear, so far as I can find, in the papers presented to Parliament, and that is, that he withdrew our Native Agent from Cabul—or, in other words, suspended all diplomatic intercourse with the Ameer, after the Peshawur Conference. This measure, indeed, seems to have been most carefully concealed from public knowledge both in India and at home. Few parts of the London Narrative are more disingenuous than the 18th paragraph,† which professes to give an account of the conduct of the Government on the close of the Conference at Peshawur. It says that no course was open to Her Majesty's Government "but to maintain an attitude of vigilant reserve." It refers, moreover, to the "imperfect means of obtaining

* Ibid., para. 37, p. 171. † Ibid., No. 73, p. 264.

information" from Cabul after that event, without even hinting that this imperfection was due entirely to the deliberate action of the Government in withdrawing its Native Agent. All this indicates a consciousness that it was a step to be concealed, and a thing to be ashamed of. And so, indeed, it was. Lord Lytton had no right to fix a quarrel on the Ameer because he had refused to accept what the Viceroy declared to be nothing but concessions in his favour. The rupture of diplomatic relations was in direct breach of the intimation which had been previously made at that Conference—that if the Ameer refused the basis, our relations with him would revert to the footing on which they stood before. If this course had been followed, some amends would have been made for the unjustifiable attempt to force the Ameer by threats of our displeasure to give up his right to the fulfilment of our engagements. But this course was not followed. Our relations with him were not restored to the former footing. Not only was our Agent withdrawn, but, as I have been informed, there was an embargo laid on the export of arms from our frontiers to the Kingdom of Cabul. All this must have tended to alarm Shere Ali, and to give him the impression that he had nothing to hope from us except at a price ruinous to the independence of his Kingdom. It amounted to an official declaration of estrangement, if not of actual hostility. It left the Government of India without any means of knowing authentically what was going on at Cabul, and it must have given an impression to the Ameer that we had deliberately cast him off.

After all the inaccurate statements which have been already exposed, it seems hardly worth while to point out that the Simla Narrative is particularly loose in its assertions respecting the circumstances of this Conference at Peshawur. For example, it states that "owing to the Envoy's increasing ill-health, several weeks were occupied in the delivery of this long statement."* The fact is that the Conferences began on the 30th of January, 1877, and that the Afghan Envoy's long statement was concluded on the 12th of February.† Even this period of twelve days was not occupied by the Envoy's "long statement," but, in a great measure, by Sir Lewis Pelly's arguments and explanations. The "long statement" of the Afghan Envoy occupied only three days—the 8th, the 10th, and the 12th of February. The two next meetings of the 15th and 19th of February were chiefly occupied by the arguments of the British Envoy; whilst the period of nearly one month from that date to the 15th of March was occupied by Lord Lytton himself in concocting the remarkable reply of that date.

There is one very curious circumstance connected with the time when Lord Lytton was on the point of closing the Peshawur Conference which does not appear in the papers presented to Parliament. On the 28th of March, 1877, two days after the death of the Afghan Envoy, and something less than two days before the Viceroy sent the imperative order to close the door against further negotiation, there was a meeting at Calcutta of

* Ibid., para. 32, p. 170.

† Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 36, Inclos. 43, p. 207.

the Legislative Council of India. This is a body before which Viceroys sometimes take the occasion of making speeches for public information. Lord Lytton did so on this occasion, and went out of his way to express his sympathy with the Indian Press in knowing so little of the policy of the Government. But there was one thing, he said, which the Viceroy could do to mitigate this evil. This was to waive "official etiquette, and seize every opportunity which comes within his reach to win confidence by showing confidence, and to dispel fictions by stating facts." In illustration of this, he gave an account of his policy towards the Ameer, and of the Conference just concluded at Peshawur. He told them that he had "invited the Ameer to a friendly interchange of views," and had "complied also with the suggestion made to us by his Highness that Envoys on the part of the two Governments should meet at Peshawur for this purpose." He did not tell them that he had bullied the Ameer into this suggestion as the only means he had of postponing or of evading demands which were new, violent, and in breach of former promises. He told them that the Conference had been "prematurely terminated by a sad event"—the death of the Cabul Envoy. He did not tell them that he was himself on the point of closing the Conference in order to prevent a new Envoy coming. He told them that his policy was to maintain, as the strongest frontier which India could have, a belt of frontier States, "by which our advice is followed without suspicion, and our word relied on without misgiving, because the first has been justified by good results, and

the second never quibbled away by timorous sub-intents or tricky saving clauses." Surely this is the most extraordinary speech ever made by a Viceroy of India. At whom was he speaking, when he talked of "sub-intents" and "tricky saving clauses?" Of whom could he be thinking? What former Viceroy had ever been even accused of such proceedings? We seem to be dealing here with a veritable psychological phenomenon. If he had read to the Council the Ninth and Tenth Articles of the Draft Treaty which he had just been preparing for the Ameer of Cabul, together with the "Secret and Subsidiary Explanatory Agreement,"—then, and then only, the Legislative Council of India would have understood the extraordinary observations which were thus addressed to them.*

The Simla Narrative of these events is dated the 10th of May, and was, therefore, drawn up within about six weeks of the close of the Conferences at Peshawur. It is important to observe the view which it expresses of the final result of the Viceroy's policy and proceedings in reference to our relations with Afghanistan. It speaks with complete, and no doubt deserved, contempt of the passionate designs to which our violence towards him had driven the Ameer. It admits that the whole movement had collapsed even before the Conferences had been summarily closed, and that the Ameer had sent a reassuring message to the authorities and population of

* Abstract of the Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, &c., 28th March, 1877. These Abstracts are, I believe, published in India.

Candahar, on the subject of his relations with the British Government. The truth, therefore, seems to be that the moment the Indian Government ceased to threaten him with the hated measure of sending British officers into his country, his disposition to be friendly returned, thus plainly indicating that any danger of hostility on his part arose solely from our attempts to depart from our previous engagements with him.* The next thing to be observed in the Simla Narrative is this—that the Viceroy and his Council did not pretend to be alarmed, or, indeed, to have any fears whatever of external aggression. On the contrary, they declared that whatever might be the future of Cabul politics, they would "await its natural development with increased confidence in the complete freedom and paramount strength of our own position."†

This is an accurate account—as far as it goes—of that estimate of our position in India which had inspired the policy of Lord Lawrence, of Lord Mayo, and of Lord Northbrook. Lord George Hamilton complained, in the late debate in the House of Commons, that he could find no Despatch in the India Office setting forth the view which I had taken as Secretary of State on the Central Asian Question.‡ I had no need to write any such

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, para. 38, p. 171.

† Ibid., para. 40, p. 172.

‡ The policy of the Government on the Central Asian Question was more than once stated and defended in the House of Commons, by my honourable friend, Mr. Grant Duff, with all the knowledge which his ability and his indefatigable industry enabled him to bring to bear upon the subject.

Despatch, because the policy of the Cabinet was in complete harmony with the conduct and the policy of Lord Lawrence, of Lord Mayo, and of Lord Northbrook. In Europe that policy was represented by the Despatches of the Foreign Office. But if I had felt called upon to write a formal Despatch on the Central Asian Question it would have been based upon that confidence in the paramount strength of our own position which Lord Lytton expresses in the paragraph which I have just quoted. It would have been written, however, under this difference of circumstances—that the confidence expressed would have been sincere, and in harmony with our actual conduct. The sincerity of it in Lord Lytton's case had serious doubts thrown upon it by the desperate efforts he had just been making to persuade the Ameer of Cabul to let us off from our engagements on the subject of British officers, and by the transparent insincerity of his repeated declarations that all these efforts were for Shere Ali's benefit, and not for our own.

As for the Government at home, it was necessary for them, at this time, to keep very quiet. They carefully concealed everything that had happened. It was on the 15th of June, 1877, that I asked certain questions in the House of Lords upon the subject. The impression left upon my mind by the reply was that nothing of any importance had occurred. Private and authentic information, indeed, of which I was in possession, prevented me from being altogether deceived. But I hoped that it might at least be the desire of the Cabinet to restrain Lord Lytton. Certainly, nothing could be more mis-

leading as to the past than the answers I received. There had been a Conference at Peshawur, but it had been arranged at the Ameer's own request. There had been no attempt to force an Envoy on the Ameer "at Cabul." Our relations with the Ameer had undergone no material change since last year. All this was very reassuring, and whatever may now be said or thought of the accuracy of the information which these replies afforded to Parliament, this at least is to be gained from them, that at that time, which was two months and a half after the close of the Peshawur Conference, no alarm whatever was felt as to the disposition or conduct of the Ameer. Now that we had withdrawn our proposal to send Envoys, and had abstained from threatening him, all was going comparatively well.

But farther evidence on this important point is to be found at a much later date, and from the same authoritative source of information. The time came when the Indian Secretary had to review officially Lord Lytton's proceedings. This was done in a Despatch, dated October 4th, 1877. In it Lord Salisbury dealt almost lightly with the whole subject,—dwelt upon the fact that there were "already indications of a change for the better in the attitude of the Ameer,"—trusted the improvement would continue,—and indicated that this end would be "most speedily attained by abstention for the present, on the one hand, from any hostile pressure on his Highness, and, on the other, from any renewed offer of the concessions which have been refused."*

* Ibid., No. 37, para. 9, p. 224.

This important declaration by Lord Salisbury establishes a complete separation and distinction between the Afghan Question as directly connected with the politics of India, and the Afghan Question as it came to be revived in an aggravated form by the action and policy of the Cabinet in support of Turkey.

In the meantime, as we all know, great events had happened. From the date of Lord Salisbury's Despatch of the 4th of October, 1877, reviewing the situation after the Conference at Peshawur, to the 7th of June, 1878, when the first rumour of the Russian Mission to Cabul reached the Viceroy, we have not a scrap of information as to what had been going on in India in the papers presented to Parliament by the India Office. There is thus a complete hiatus of eight months, for the history of which we must go to the papers connected with the Eastern Question in Europe, and to what are called "the ordinary sources of information." Some of these are at least as worthy of confidence as the narratives and the denials of the Government, and the main facts of the succeeding history are not open to dispute.

The Russian Declaration of War against Turkey had followed close upon the termination of the Conference at Peshawur. Early in October, when Lord Salisbury wrote the Despatch just quoted, the fortunes of the Russian campaign were doubtful both in Europe and in Asia. Probably this contributed to the spirit of comparative composure which inspires that paper, and which contrasts so much with the nervous fears apparent in the Afghan policy which had so completely failed.

But soon after Lord Salisbury's Despatch of October 4th, 1877, the tide had turned both in Europe and in Western Asia, and, when it did turn, the reverse current came in as it does on the sands of Solway or of Dee. The Turks were defeated : Kars was taken : Plevna fell : the Balkans were crossed : and the armies of Russia poured into the Roumelian plains. There is reason to believe that the agitation of the Government at home communicated itself to their representative in India. Long before this, as we have seen, he had begun to play at soldiers, he had been accumulating forces on the frontiers, building a bridge of boats upon the Indus, inciting border Governments to aggressive movements on or beyond their own frontier, and formally occupying Quetta,—not in connexion with any mere Khelat disturbance, but as a part of a new Imperial policy. All round, it had been a policy of fuss and fear, giving indications that the obscure threat of Sir Lewis Pelly at Peshawur would be carried into effect—namely, that the British Government would adopt some new measure on the frontier which would be regardless of the interests of Afghanistan. The tongue of the Indian press was let loose upon the subject, and the Indian mind was agitated by the expectation of great movements and bold designs.

Some of these were soon known to, or surmised by, Russia. Colonel Brackenbury, the military correspondent of the *Times*, who crossed the Balkans with the force of General Gourko in July, 1877, tells us the following curious story :—"One day in Bulgaria, I think it was the day when Gourko's force captured the Shipka, and we

met young Skobeloff on the top of the Pass, that brilliant and extraordinary young General said to me suddenly, 'Have you any news from India?' I replied that the Russian postal authorities took care that I had no news from anywhere. His answer was, 'I cannot find out what has become of that column of 10,000 men that has been organised by your people to raise Central Asia against us.'" Possibly the rumour which had reached the Russian General may have been at that time unfounded. Perhaps it may have ranked with the "baggage-animal" rumours against Shere Ali, of which Lord Lytton made so much. But there is reason to believe that if not then, at least at a somewhat later period, the busy brains which were contemplating a call on Eastern troops "to redress the balance of the West," had it also in contemplation, as part of the Imperial policy, to make some serious military movement against Russia beyond the frontiers of India. There is a well-known connexion between the *Pioneer*, an Indian Journal, and the Government of India. In the number of that paper, dated September 4th, 1878, there appeared a letter, dated Simla, August 28th, which stated that in anticipation of a war with Russia, it was no secret that an army of 30,000 men had been prepared in India, with the intention of forcing its way through Afghanistan, and attacking the Russian dominions in Central Asia. Considering that on a much more recent occasion, as I shall presently show, Lord Lytton, or his Government, seems to have communicated at once to the correspondents of the press the orders sent to him by the Cabinet, on the subject of

his final dealings with the Ameer, it is not at all improbable that the writer of this letter in the *Pioneer* had authentic information. The British Government was, of course, quite right to take every measure in its power to defeat Russia if it contemplated the probability of a war with that Power. It is notorious that such a war was anticipated as more or less probable during the whole of the year previous to the signature of the Treaty of Berlin. All the well-known steps taken by the Government in the way of military preparation had reference to that contingency, and there is nothing whatever improbable that among those preparations, the scheme referred to in the *Pioneer* had been planned.

But if the Government of England had a perfect right to make such preparations, and to devise such plans, it will hardly be denied that Russia had an equal right to take precautions against them. It is true she had an engagement with us not to interfere in Afghanistan. But it will hardly be contended that she was to continue to be bound by this engagement when the Viceroy of India was known or believed to be organising an attack upon her, of which Afghanistan was to be the base. The letter written at Simla, to which I have referred above, expressly states that the Russian Mission to Cabul was sent under the apprehension of such a movement, and having for its object to bribe Shere Ali to oppose our progress. Sir Henry Rawlinson, in his Article in the *Nineteenth Century* for December, 1878, professes to give an account in some detail of the proceedings of Russia in connexion with the Cabul Mission. He does not give his

authorities; but, as he has better sources of information than most other men upon this subject, we may take that account as the nearest approximation to the truth at which we can arrive at present. He takes no notice of the intentions of the Indian Government to attack Russia. But his whole narrative shows that the Russian movements, of which the Mission to Cabul was only one part, were of a defensive character, and in anticipation of a war with England. He says that they were a mere "tentative demonstration against the Afghan frontier,"—that "the force was totally inadequate to any serious aggressive purpose,"—and that the military expeditions were abandoned when the signature of the Treaty of Berlin removed the danger of war.* It is well worthy of observation, as I have already pointed out, that of the three military movements then contemplated by Russia, two were movements directed from territories over which she had acquired command between 1864 and 1869, or in other words, before the Umballa Conferences. The main column was to start from Tashkend, and move by Samarkand to Jám. The right flanking column alone was to move from a point in the former territories of Khiva, whilst the left column was to be directed from the borders of Kokhand, upon the Oxus near Kunduz, crossing the mountains which buttress the Jaxartes Valley to the south. The whole force did not exceed 12,000 men Such was the terrible danger to which our Indian Empire was exposed.

---

* *Nineteenth Century*, No. 22, pp. 982, 983.

The Peace of Berlin stopped the whole movement. It has been stated that the Mission proceeded to Cabul after that event was known. But as the Treaty of Berlin was not signed till the 13th of July, and as the Russian Envoy is stated by the Viceroy to have been received in Durbar by the Ameer, at Cabul, on the 26th of July,* it is obviously impossible that this can be correct. Sir Henry Rawlinson, indeed, places the arrival of the Russian Envoy on the 10th of August, but he admits in a note that this date is uncertain. Even if it were correct, it would by no means follow that the Treaty of Berlin had been heard of by the Russian authorities in Central Asia before that time.

We may, therefore, take it as certain that the whole of the Russian proceedings, including the Mission, were taken in connexion with a policy of self-defence, and that the Mission to Cabul was a direct and immediate consequence, not of any preconceived design on the part of Russia to invade India, or gratuitously to break her engagement with us in respect to Afghanistan, but of the threatening policy of the British Cabinet in Europe, and of its intention, in pursuance of that policy, to make India the base of hostile operations against Russia.

This being so, let us now look at the position in which we had placed the Ameer. We had treated him, as I have shown, not only with violence, but with bad faith. We had formally declared that we owed him nothing in the way of assistance or defence against any

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 61, p. 231.

enemy, foreign or domestic. We had founded this declaration on unjust and disingenuous distinctions between Treaty engagements, and the solemn promises, whether written or verbal, of former Viceroys. We had withdrawn our Agent from his Capital. We had thrown out ambiguous threats that we should direct our frontier policy without any reference to his interests or his wishes.

In spite of all this, there is no proof that the Ameer had the slightest disposition to invite, or even welcome, the agents of Russia. On the contrary, all the evidence of any value goes to show that he was quite as jealous of Russian officers as he was of British officers coming to his country. Our own Agent had told Lord Lytton that this was the real condition of his mind just before the Peshawur Conference, and there had been distinct indications of the truth of this opinion in the language of the Ameer just before that Conference. It was consistent with the frame of mind of the Viceroy to believe against the Ameer every rumour which came to him through his secret agents, of whom we know nothing, and the truth of whose accounts is very probably on a par with that of the dealer in "baggage animals" whose narrative has been quoted on a previous page.

In spite of all this, there is the best reason to believe that the Ameer received the intimation of the approaching Russian Mission with sincere annoyance and alarm. There are indications of it, but only indications of it, in the papers presented to Parliament. One of our spies, a native doctor, had heard the Ameer tell his Minister that the Russian Envoy had crossed the Oxus on his way to

Cabul, "refusing to be stopped."* The Ameer had sent orders to cease the opposition, but this report does not say under what amount of pressure, or with what degree of reluctance. Major Cavagnari, however, dating from Peshawur, on the 21st of July, expressly says: "Chetan Shah has arrived. He corroborates the intelligence I have recently reported regarding Russian pressure on the Ameer, and military preparations in Trans-Oxus."†

I must at once express my opinion that under whatever circumstances or from whatever motives the Russian Mission was sent and was received, it was impossible for the British Government to acquiesce in that reception as the close of our transactions with the Ameer upon the subject of Missions to his Court. We cannot allow Russia to acquire predominant, or even co-equal, influence with ourselves in Afghanistan. The Cabinet was therefore not only justified in taking, but they were imperatively called upon to take, measures to ascertain the real object of that Mission, and if it had any political character, to secure that no similar Mission should be sent again.

But considering that under the circumstances which have been narrated, the sending of the Mission could only be considered a war measure on the part of Russia, and had arisen entirely out of circumstances which threatened hostilities between the two countries,—considering farther, that, as regarded the reception of the Mission, we had ourselves placed the Ameer in a position of extreme difficulty, and had reason to believe and

---

* Ibid., No. 42, p. 227. † Ibid., No. 48, Inclos. p. 229.

to know that he was not in any way party to the Russian policy in sending it,—justice absolutely demanded, and our own self-respect demanded, that we should proceed towards the Ameer with all the dignity of conscious strength, and of conscious responsibility for the natural results of our own previous conduct and policy.

There is, I am happy to acknowledge, some evidence that at the last moment the Cabinet at home did feel some compunction on account of the crisis which they had brought about. There is no evidence that the Viceroy felt any. He was all for instant measures of threat and of compulsion. But as the last steps in this sad and discreditable history are only in too complete accordance with those which had gone before, I must give them in some detail.

Lord Lytton, by his own act in withdrawing our native Agent from Cabul, had placed the Government of India in the position of being without any authentic information from that Capital. It could only hear of what might be going on through spies of untrustworthy character, or by rumour and report. The first rumours of the approach of a Russian Mission, and of the mobilisation of Russian forces in Turkestan, reached the Government of India from the 7th to the 19th of June, 1878.* But it was not till after the lapse of another month, on the 30th and 31st of July,† that any definite information was obtained. Even then, it does not seem to have been very accurate, but it was certain that a Russian officer of high rank,

* Ibid., Nos. 39, 40, p. 226. † Ibid., No.42, p. 229.

with a large escort, had made his way to Cabul, and had been received there.

It will be observed that this period of nearly two months was exactly the period during which we passed in Europe from the imminent danger of a war with Russia to the probability of peace. The Salisbury-Schouvalow agreement was only signed on the 30th of May, and nothing of it could be known in India or in Turkestan early in June. But before the end of July the Treaty of Berlin had been signed, and peace with Russia was assured. This was the condition of things when, on the 30th of July, Lord Lytton telegraphed that he had certain information of the arrival and of the importance of the Russian Mission. It is only due to Lord Lytton to point out that he saw, and that he raised, the obvious question whether, now that peace with Russia was assured, the Russian Mission should not be dealt with directly between the Cabinet of London and the Russian Government, rather than indirectly between the Government of India and the Ameer of Cabul. He did not recommend the first of these two courses rather than the last—that was hardly his business. But he did suggest it. The Cabinet, however, simply replied by telling him to make sure of his facts in the first place.* On the 2nd of August Lord Lytton proposed† that the Government of India should insist on the reception at Cabul of a British Mission, pointing out that now we might probably secure all our previous demands without paying for them any price in the shape of "dynastic obligations."

* Ibid., No. 43, p. 228. † Ibid., No. 45, p. 228.

On the 3rd this course was approved by the Cabinet.*

Accordingly, on the 14th of August, the Viceroy wrote a letter to the Ameer intimating that a British Mission would be sent to Cabul, in the person of Sir Neville Chamberlain, who was to visit his Highness "immediately at Cabul," to converse with him on urgent affairs touching the course of recent events at Cabul, and in the countries bordering on Afghanistan.† This letter was sent in advance by a native gentleman, Nawab Gholam Hussein Khan.

Within three days after this letter was written, an important event happened at Cabul. On the 17th of August the Ameer lost his favourite son, Abdoolah Jan. If the unfortunate Ameer had been perturbed by the conduct of the Indian Government, if he had been still further troubled by the necessity of receiving a Russian Mission, this bereavement must have completed the miseries of his position. When Lord Lytton heard of this event on the 26th of August,‡ he was obliged, out of decency, to arrange for the postponement of Sir Neville Chamberlain's departure, so that the Mission should not reach Cabul until after the expiry of the customary mourning of forty days. A second letter was also sent to the Ameer, being a letter of condolence. The intention here was good, but unfortunately it was hardly carried into effect. Lord Lytton's impatience could not be restrained, and indeed he confessed that he did not think it expedient to relax preparations for the speedy departure of the

* Ibid., No. 46, p. 229. † Ibid., No. 49, Inclos. 4, p. 232.
‡ Ibid., No. 50, p. 233.

Mission "beyond what was decorous."* The decorum seems to have consisted in spending as many as possible of the forty days in despatching a perfect fire of messages through every conceivable channel, all of them in a more or less imperious tone. The Ameer was plied with threats through native Agents that the Mission would leave Peshawur on the 16th of September, so as to time the probable arrival at Cabul as exactly as possible at the end of the forty days, whilst at the same time he was informed that resistance or delay would be considered as an act of "open hostility." Moreover, these fiery messages were repeated to the subordinate officers of Shere Ali at the forts and citadels on the road—so that no indignity might be spared to the unfortunate Ameer.†

It must be remembered that all this was being transacted at a time when it was known that the Russian Envoy had himself left Cabul on or about the 25th of August,‡ leaving only some members of the Mission behind, and when it was quite certain that no hostile movement on the part of Russia could be contemplated, or was possible. But this is not all. The Viceroy's messenger, Nawab Gholam Hussein Khan, reached Cabul on the 10th of September, and on the 17th Sir Neville Chamberlain was able to report from Peshawur the result of the first interview with the Ameer. From this it clearly appeared that Shere Ali did not intend to refuse to receive a Mission. What he objected to was the "harsh words" and the

* Ibid., No. 50, p. 233.
† Afghan Corresp., II., 1878, pp. 16, 17.
‡ Ibid., No. 51, p. 234.

indecent haste. "It is as if they were come by force. I do not agree to the Mission coming in this manner, and until my officers have received orders from me, how can the Mission come? It is as if they wish to disgrace me. I am a friend as before, and entertain no ill-will. The Russian Envoy has come, and has come with my permission. I am still afflicted with grief at the loss of my son, and have had no time to think over the matter." On the following day, the 18th of September, Sir Neville Chamberlain reported a farther message from Nawab Hussein Khan, that he had been assured by the Minister of the Ameer, on his oath, that "the Ameer intimated that he would send for the Mission in order to clear up mutual misunderstandings, provided there was no attempt to force the Mission without his consent being first granted according to usual custom, otherwise he would resist it, as coming in such a manner would be a slight to him." He complained of the false reports against him from news writers. He denied having invited the Russian Mission. "He believed a personal interview with the British Mission would adjust misunderstandings." Some of the Russians were detained by sickness in Cabul. The Nawab thought that the Russians would soon be dismissed, and that the Ameer would then send for the British Mission.*

To all this the Viceroy replied by telegraph, on the 19th of September, that it made no change in the situation, and that the preconcerted movements of Sir Neville

* Ibid., pp. 242-3.

Chamberlain should not be delayed.* If the Government wanted war—if they now saw their opportunity of getting by force what they had failed in getting by a tortuous diplomacy—then they were quite right. There was not a moment to be lost. It was evident that at any moment, and in all probability at the end of the forty days, a message might be received taking away all excuse for threats. But if the Government wanted peace, then nothing could be more violent and unjust than their proceedings, nor could anything be more frivolous than the pretexts they put forward. It is said that the Ameer's object was "to keep the Mission waiting indefinitely." It did not stand well in the mouth of the Viceroy to attribute "ostensible pretexts" to others—whose only crime was that they had been able to detect his own. There was no evidence and no probability that the Ameer desired an indefinite postponement. It was only reasonable and natural that he should wish to see the Russian Mission finally cleared out of his Capital before he received the British Mission. And if any inconvenience arose from the Mission having been already sent to Peshawur, that inconvenience was entirely due to the blundering which had sent it there in such unnecessary and unreasonable haste.

And so—casting aside all decorum as well as all justice—the Mission was advanced to Ali Musjid on the 21st of September,—five or six days before the expiry of the forty days of mourning,—and there, as is well known, by orders of the Ameer it was stopped.

* Ibid., p. 243.

Following on this, on the 19th of October, a letter from the Ameer was received, complaining of the "harsh and breathless haste" with which he had been treated, and of the "hard words, repugnant to courtesy and politeness," which had been addressed to himself and to his officers.* The Viceroy now at once telegraphed to the Government at home that "any demand for apology would now, in my opinion, be useless, and only expose us to fresh insult, whilst losing valuable time." He proposed an immediate declaration of war, and an immediate advance of troops into Afghanistan.†

This was on the 19th of October. The Cabinet replied on the 25th that they did not consider matters to be then "ripe for taking all the steps" mentioned in the Viceroy's telegram. They were of opinion that, before crossing the frontiers of Afghanistan, "a demand, in temperate language, should be made for an apology, and acceptance of a permanent British Mission within the Afghan frontiers, and that a reply should be demanded within a time sufficient for the purpose."‡ In the meantime military preparations were to be continued.

It will be observed that in this reply the Cabinet took advantage of the position to put forward a demand on the Ameer not merely to receive a Mission, but to admit a permanent Mission, and to do this without offering to Shere Ali any one of the countervailing advantages which, before, they had professed a willingness to bestow upon him.

---

* Afghan. Corresp., I., 1878, No. 61, p. 263.
† Ibid., No. 64, p. 253. ‡ Ibid., No. 65, p. 264.

A gap—an interval of five days—here occurs in the papers presented to Parliament. Between the telegram of the 25th and the Ultimatum Letter to the Ameer dated the 30th October, there is nothing to show what was going on. But this gap is in a measure supplied from a singular source of information. On the 1st of November a long telegram was published by the *Daily News* from its well-known correspondent at Simla, which professes to give an account of what had been done, and was then being done, both by the Viceroy and by the Cabinet at home. This account is confirmed by the papers subsequently presented to Parliament, in so far as it relates to particulars which are traceable in them. It is, therefore, a reasonable presumption that the same account is not altogether erroneous as regards those other particulars which cannot be so verified. Whether it is perfectly accurate or not, it gives a striking picture of the atmosphere which prevailed at the head-quarters of the Government of India, and is a signal illustration of the truth of Sir J. Kaye's opinion that the spirit of the Indian services, both civil and military, is almost always in favour of war. The telegram published in the *Daily News* of November 1st is as follows :—

" SIMLA, Thursday night (Oct. 31, 1878).

" The formal decision of the Viceregal Council was made to-day in full self-consciousness of bitter humiliation. The following is the succinct story of this blow to its prestige :—

" At the Cabinet Council on Friday last (Oct. 25) the formal decision was telegraphed to despatch an Ultimatum

to the Ameer. At the Viceregal Council held here on Saturday (Oct. 26), there was a unanimous agreement to urge the reconsideration of the matter on the Home Government. Representations were made with an earnestness seldom characterising official communications, the Viceroy throwing all his personal weight into the scale. A continuous interchange of telegrams followed, and yesterday (Oct. 30) there was good hope of a successful issue. The Viceregal Council assembled this morning (Oct. 31) to give effect to the final resolve of the Home Cabinet, which adheres meanwhile to its decision as telegraphed.

"The emissary despatched on Monday (Oct. 28), bearing the Ultimatum as prescribed by the Cabinet, was instructed to receive at a point *en route* a telegram bidding him go on or stop, as the final resolve might dictate. Thus three days are saved. The emissary proceeds towards the frontier to await his application for admission to Cabul. It is hoped here that the Ameer will forbid his entrance, and decline all communication with him."

It is impossible not to ask how this correspondent came to be informed on the 1st of November of the decision which we now know was actually taken by the Cabinet on the 25th of October. It is impossible to suppose that telegrams so delicate and important were sent otherwise than in cipher. Is it possible that the Viceroy and the Government of India communicated all these messages to the representatives of the press, and thus appealed to the popular opinion of the Indian services against the decision of Her Majesty's Government?

But now, once more, we emerge into the light of

official day. When the curtain rises on the work of those five days we find the Cabinet sending to the Viceroy, on the 30th of October, an Ultimatum Letter,* which was to be sent to the Ameer. It does not seem certain whether the first draft of this letter was drawn up by the Viceroy or by the Cabinet. The original authorship of the draft matters not. We have the "Text of letter, as approved." The Cabinet is, therefore, responsible for every line, and for every word. Let us see what it says.

The very first sentence sets forth unfairly the purposes of the Mission on which the Viceroy had intended to send Sir Lewis Pelly to Cabul. It is a repetition of the "ostensible pretexts" which the Indian Secretary and the Viceroy had together devised to cover the secret objects of that Mission. It pretends that it was a Mission of disinterested friendship towards the Ameer, whereas it was a Mission intended to provide against "a prospective peril to British interests"† by forcing on the Ameer a measure which we were pledged not to force upon him.

But the second sentence of this Cabinet letter is a great deal worse. It asserts, in the first place, that the Ameer left the Viceroy's proposal "long unanswered." It asserts, in the second place, that the Ameer refused that proposal on two grounds, one of which was "that he could not answer for the safety of any European Envoy in his country."

Neither of these assertions is true. The Ameer did not leave the Viceroy's letter "long unanswered;" and

* Ibid., No. 66, p. 254.

† Instructions to Lord Lytton, Ibid., p. 156.

when he did answer it, he did not ground his refusal on the plea that he could not answer for the safety of an Envoy.* The facts are these: The letter of the Viceroy proposing the Mission, dated May 5th, reached Cabul on the 17th of May, 1876,† and was probably not brought before the Ameer till the 18th. Shere Ali's answer was dated May 22nd,‡ and we happen to know from our own Agent that it was the result of deliberations in his Durbar, which (apparently for the very purpose of avoiding delay), we are expressly told, were held "continuously" for the four days which intervened.§

So much for the truth of the first assertion made by the Cabinet in the second paragraph of the Ultimatum. Now for the second.

In the Ameer's answer of May 22nd there is not one word about the safety of a British Envoy in his country. His refusal to receive, or at least his desire to postpone indefinitely, the reception of a British Mission is put wholly and entirely upon a different ground—which, no doubt, it was not convenient for the Cabinet to notice. The reason assigned by the Ameer was the very simple one, that he was perfectly satisfied with the assurances given to him by Lord Northbrook at Simla in 1873, and that he did not desire any reopening of negotiations upon the subject to which those assurances referred.

The reckless unfairness with which the Ameer of Cabul has been treated by Her Majesty's present Government

* Simla Narrative, para. 23. † Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, p. 166.
‡ Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 7, p. 174.
§ Ibid., Inclos. 8, p. 176.

throughout the transactions which have resulted in war, could not be better illustrated than by this Cabinet Ultimatum. In this case the Cabinet has not even the excuse of having been led astray by similar recklessness on the part of the Viceroy. In the 23rd paragraph of his Simla Narrative he tells this particular part of the story with substantial correctness. He does not accuse the Ameer of leaving his letter "long unanswered." On the contrary, he speaks of the reply as having come "shortly afterwards." But it is much more important to observe that Lord Lytton states, as fairly as the Cabinet states unfairly, the grounds of objection taken by the Ameer:—"On the ground," says Lord Lytton, "that he desired no change in his relations with the British Government."* Lord Lytton also states with fairness that the argument about the safety of Envoys, which is not even mentioned by the Ameer, appears only as one among several "additional reasons" which were reported by our Native Agent as having been used in Durbar during the "continuous" discussion of several days' duration.

But the unfairness and inaccuracies of the Cabinet Ultimatum do not end even here. It proceeds thus: "Yet the British Government, unwilling to embarrass you, accepted your excuses." Was there ever such an account given of such transactions as those of the Viceroy, subsequent to the receipt of the Ameer's reply? So far from "accepting his excuses," the Government of India, after leaving that reply "long unanswered"—out

* Simla Narrative, para. 23, p. 166.

of pure embarrassment as to what to do—began addressing to the Ameer a series of letters and messages, one more imperious and insulting than another, until, as we have seen, they ended by suspending all diplomatic relations with him, and were now about to declare war against him because he claimed his right to consider as binding upon us the pledges of the British Crown.

I confess I cannot write these sentences without emotion. They seem to me to be the record of sayings and of doings which cast an indelible disgrace upon our country. The page of history is full of the Proclamations and Manifestoes of powerful Kings and Governments who have desired to cover, under plausible pretexts, acts of violence and injustice against weaker States. It may well be doubted whether in the whole of this melancholy list any one specimen could be found more unfair in its accusations, more reckless in its assertions, than this Ultimatum Letter, addressed to the Ameer of Cabul, by the Cabinet of the Queen.

I repeat here that, holding, as I do, that we cannot allow Russian influence and power to be established in Afghanistan, I hold also, as a consequence, that Her Majesty's Government could not acquiesce in the position in which they would have been placed by the acceptance at Cabul of the Russian Mission, followed by a refusal on the part of the Ameer to receive a Mission from the British Crown. But they were bound to remember that they had themselves brought the Russian Mission upon the Ameer, and upon ourselves; and they were equally bound to consider that Shere Ali was not refusing to

accept a Mission from the Viceroy, but was, on the contrary, expressing his opinion that "a personal interview with a British Mission would adjust misunderstandings." All that the Ameer desired was that this Mission should not be forced upon him by open violence in the sight of all his officers and of all his people. They knew that he did not complain of the determination of the Indian Government to send an Envoy, but only of the "blustering" messages to himself and to his officers by which he had been incessantly plied even during his days of grief. They knew that if ever there had been real mourning in the world it must have been the mourning of Shere Ali for Abdoolah Jan. For this boy he had sacrificed whatever of affection and of fidelity is possible among the children of a harem. With this boy at his side, he had sat enthroned, as an equal, beside the Queen's Viceroy at Umballa. For this boy he had spent his years in endeavouring to procure a dynastic guarantee from the Government of India. Now, all these memories and all these ambitions had vanished like a dream. No prospect remained to him but the hated succession of a rebellious son. Well might Shere Ali say, as he did say, in his letter of October 6th:* "In consequence of the attack of grief and affliction which has befallen me by the decree of God, great distraction has seized the mind of this supplicant at God's threshold. The trusted officers of the British Government, therefore, ought to have observed patience and stayed at such a time." Unless

* Afghan Corresp., II., 1878, p. 18.

the Government desired to force a quarrel, and were glad of an opportunity to rectify a "haphazard frontier" by means of war, there is nothing to be said in defence of the unjust and indecent haste with which they pushed up the Mission to Ali Musjid even before the forty days of mourning were expired. It cannot be pretended that there was any danger from Russia then. In the meantime our own position had not long before been described by Lord Lytton himself as a position in which we were "able to pour an overwhelming force into Afghanistan for the vindication of our own interests, long before a single Russian soldier could reach Cabul."* The haste with which the extreme measure of war was hurried has crowned and consummated the injustice of the previous transactions, and even if the war had been ultimately inevitable, which it was not, the Government cannot escape censure for the conduct from which the supposed necessity arose.

Unjust and impolitic as I think the conduct of the Government has been in the East of Europe, it has been wisdom and virtue itself in comparison with its conduct in India. I venture to predict that the time is coming, and coming soon, when the reply of Lord Lytton to the statement of the Afghan Envoy at Peshawur, will be read by every Englishman with shame and confusion of face. In a way, but in a very humiliating way, the whole of these transactions carry us back to the days of Clive. We are reminded only too much of the unscrupulousness of his conduct. But we are not reminded, even in the least

* Ibid., p. 183.

degree, of the violence of his temptations, or of the splendour of his achievements. There has not been, indeed, any such daring fraud as duplicate Treaties, one genuine and the other counterfeit—one on white paper and the other upon red. But, in a timid way, the Draft Treaty which was to be offered to the Ameer, as compared with the representations of it made to him in the instructions to Sir L. Pelly, and in the letter of Captain Grey, comes very near the mark. On the other hand, the Government of India has had none of the excuses which have been pleaded on behalf of Clive. We have not had to deal with any dangerous villains whose own treachery was double-dyed, and who might hold our fate in the hollow of their hand. There has been no Surajah Dowlah, and no Omichund. Shere Ali is a half-barbarian, but his relations with Lord Mayo showed that he could respond to friendship, and could be secured by truth. His Minister was straightforwardness itself when compared with the English Viceroy. It seems almost like the profanation of a great name to compare anything lately done by the Government of India with the deeds done by the genius of Clive. But I speak of what was bad or doubtful in his conduct, not of what was great. In this aspect of them the proceedings I have recorded have been worse than his. In the first place, Clive was only the agent of a "Company," and even that Company was not really responsible for his proceedings. The Viceroy now represents the Sovereign, and all his doings are the doings of the Ministers of the Queen. In the second place, the earlier servants of the Company were not the inheritors

of obligations of long standing, or of relations with native Princes well understood and regulated by solemn Proclamations of the Imperial Crown. Lord Lytton was bound by all these, and by traditions of conduct handed down through a long roll of illustrious names. From these traditions he has departed in matters of vital moment. The Government of India has given way to small temptations—to ungenerous anger at cutting but truthful answers, and to unmanly fears of imaginary dangers. Under the influence of these, it has paltered with the force of existing Treaties; it has repudiated solemn pledges; it has repeated over and over again insincere professions; and it has prepared new Treaties full of "tricky saving clauses." Finally, it has visited on a weak and unoffending native Sovereign in Asia, the natural and necessary consequences of its own incoherent course in Europe. The policy which brought the Russian army to the gates of Constantinople is the same policy which brought the Russian Mission to Cabul.

It is always in the power of any Executive Government to get the country into a position out of which it cannot escape without fighting. This is the terrible privilege of what, in the language of our Constitution, is called the Prerogative. It is, in reality, the privilege of every Executive, whether of monarchical or of popular origin. I am not one of those who are of opinion that it could be lodged elsewhere with any advantage, or even with any safety. The majorities which support a strong Government in power are invariably more reckless than the Ministry. In this Eastern Question, wrong and injurious

as I think their policy has been, it has been wise and moderate as compared with the language of many of their supporters in both Houses of Parliament. I have too vivid a recollection of the difficulty which was experienced by the Cabinet of Lord Aberdeen in moderating within reasonable bounds the excitement of the country, to place the smallest confidence in any scheme for checking, through some popular agency, the action of the responsible advisers of the Crown. They are always, after all, through a process of "natural selection," the ablest men of the party to which they belong. Except under very rare conditions, they are more disposed, and are more able, to look all round them, than any other body in the State. They may commit—and in this Eastern Question it is my contention that they have committed—terrible mistakes, both in Europe and in India. These mistakes—and errors much more serious than mistakes—I have endeavoured to expose. Some of them affect the gravest considerations of public duty. They affect the permanent interests of this country and of India, as involved in the good faith and honour of the Crown. I now leave this review of them to the conscience of my countrymen, and to the judgment of later times.

APPENDIX.

(Page 52.)

Extract from the Preface to "The Eastern Question."

"LOOKING at the manner in which witnesses adverse to the Government have been treated when they have produced evidence of the truth, I think it possible that some objection may be taken to the use I have made in the following pages of Lord Mayo's letters to me when I was Secretary of State. I do not myself feel that any explanation on this matter is required, since the passages I have quoted are all of an essentially public character. But there are some points connected with this subject to which I am very glad to have an opportunity of directing public attention.

"In the Afghan branch of the Eastern Question it has been deemed important by the Government to make out, if they could, that Shere Ali had at one time been perfectly willing, if, indeed, he was not positively eager, to receive British officers as Political Agents or Residents in his Kingdom. This question has not really the importance which the Government have attached to it,—because it was their duty to think mainly, not of what that unfortunate Prince may or may not have been willing to do at a former time under unknown circumstances and conditions,—but of what he had a right to object to under the actual engagements made

with him by the representatives of the Crown in India. Nevertheless, the Government have shown a very great anxiety to prove that the Ameer had been willing to admit British officers as Residents in his Kingdom ; and this is so far well—inasmuch as it shows some consciousness that they had no right to force the measure upon him if he were not willing. In the whole of their dealings with Afghanistan, this is the only homage they have paid to virtue. But their method of proceeding has been singular. The only two witnesses of any value on whose evidence they have relied, have been Colonel Burne, who was Lord Mayo's Private Secretary, and Captain Grey, who was Persian Interpreter at the Umballa Conferences in 1869. Colonel Burne's evidence is given in the 'Afghan Correspondence' (I. 1878, No. 36, Enclosure 5, page 174). Of Colonel Burne's perfect good faith there can be no shadow of a doubt. But several circumstances are to be observed in respect to his testimony. In the first place, he is now at the head of the Foreign Department of the India Office, and concerned in all the policy towards Shere Ali which has led to the Afghan war. In the second place, he writes nine years after the events of which he speaks, and wholly, so far as appears, from personal recollection. In the third place, he speaks with extraordinary confidence, considering that other officers of the Government who were present at all the Conferences positively deny the accuracy of his impressions. In the fourth place, a portion of what he says in respect of Lord Mayo's opinions, appears to me to be distinctly at variance with the evidence of Lord Mayo's own letters to myself. In the fifth and last place, it is to be observed that the whole of his

evidence is founded on the knowledge he acquired as Private Secretary of Lord Mayo, 'in his full confidence,' and carrying in his mind that Viceroy's private conversations.

"Now I am far from saying or implying that the Government had no right to use the information derivable from this source. But I do say that in a matter of the highest importance, involving the honour of the Crown, and the peace of India, they were bound to take every means in their power to test and to verify the personal recollections of Colonel Burne. To use evidence of this kind as a means of ascertaining truth, is one thing:—to use it as a means of justifying foregone conclusions, is a very different thing. The two methods of handling such evidence are very distinct. We know, on the evidence of Mr. Seton Karr, who was Foreign Secretary to the Government of India at the Umballa Conferences, who was present at them all, and who must have been in constant personal communication both with Lord Mayo and all other principal persons there, that his evidence was never asked by the Government, and that this evidence, if it had been asked for, would have been given against that of Colonel Burne. I venture to add, that the Government, knowing that I was Secretary of State during the whole of Lord Mayo's Viceroyalty, and in possession of all his letters, might have applied to me for access to them. The whole of them, without reserve, would have been at the disposal of the Government. But if the Government were at liberty to use, and to found important action upon, the private information of Lord Mayo's Private Secretary, speaking of Lord Mayo's private conversations, much more must I be at liberty to correct that evidence by

Lord Mayo's own written testimony, conveyed in the most authentic of all forms—letters written at the time.

"As regards the purport and the value of Captain Grey's evidence, I have analysed it at the proper place, in the following work. But there is one circumstance in connexion with that evidence which is another illustration of the rash and inconsiderate use which the Government has been making of testimony of this kind. Captain Grey, from his position of Persian Interpreter at Umballa, was necessarily in frequent and confidential communication with Noor Mohammed Khan, the favourite Minister and friend of Shere Ali. Now Noor Mohammed being evidently a very able man, and comparatively well acquainted with Europeans, was naturally much considered by all officers of the Indian Government as the best source of information on the policy of the Afghan State, and on the personal feelings and desires of his master. In the course of confidential conversations, wholly private and unofficial, such a Minister is induced to say many things which he would only say in perfect reliance that they would be considered as confidential in the strictest sense of that word. In fact, Noor Mohammed did frequently give information to our Officers and Agents, which it would have been the highest breach of confidence on their part to repeat in such a manner as to render it possible that the sayings of his Minister should get round to the Ameer. Yet this is the very breach of confidence which, in heated pursuit of their object, the Government appear to have committed in regard to the evidence of Captain Grey. At the Peshawur Conference, shortly before his death, among the other just complaints which Noor Mohammed had to make against the conduct of

Lord Lytton and of his Government, this was one—that the letter from Captain Grey of October 13th, 1876, quoting Noor Mohammed as having been willing to advise or consent to the reception of British officers as Residents in Afghanistan, had been sent to him under circumstances which brought it before the Cabul Durbar. 'It was laid before the Durbar,' said Noor Mohammed to his friend, Dr. Bellew, on the 28th of January, 1877, 'and I was at once pointed out as the encourager of the Government in this design. It was as much as an order for my death.'* Of the unjustifiable character of this letter, in other respects, I have spoken in the text. I refer here only to the breach of confidence involved in its quotations of the most private conversations of the Minister of the Ameer.

"There was another circumstance connected with the Afghan question which has, in my opinion, imposed it upon me absolutely as a public duty, that I should explain Lord Mayo's engagements at Umballa, as he explained them to me. That circumstance is that one of the most serious misrepresentations made on behalf of the Government on this subject has been founded on a single passage in one of his private letters to me, which Lord Mayo has himself quoted in a public Despatch. The case is rather a curious one, and deserves special notice.

"It will be seen that the first public Despatch of April 3rd, 1869,† in which Lord Lord Mayo reported the proceedings at Umballa, is a very meagre one. The more detailed despatch which followed on the 1st of

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 36, Enclos. 34, p. 195.
† Ibid., No. 17, p. 88.

July,* was drawn forth from him by my Despatch of the 14th of May,† in which I had stated the objections which the Cabinet felt to one passage in his letter to the Ameer. In that second Despatch, a much fuller account is given. But one of the principal paragraphs (No. 22),‡ namely, that in which the Viceroy summed up the result of his negotiations, expressly refers to, and quotes the summing-up with which he had in the meantime supplied me in a private letter.

"In that private letter Lord Mayo had classified the main points of the final arrangement on the principle of giving one list of the proposals which had been decided in the negative, and another list of the proposals which had been decided in the affirmative. It is, of course, an incident of all classifications of this kind—or, indeed, of any kind—that they place together things which are congruous only in some one or two particulars, and may be quite incongruous in every other. This inconvenience was somewhat increased, in the present case, by the heading or title which he attached to the two lists. The proposals which had been negatived were called 'What the Ameer is not to have.' The proposals which had been affirmed were called 'What the Ameer is to have.'

"It was inevitable that on this principle of classification Lord Mayo should include in the same list, things which the Ameer was "not to have" as a boon, and things which he was "not to have" as a burden. The benefits which he had hoped for, but which had been refused him, and the demands on our side from which he was to be relieved—all came naturally and

---

* Ibid., No. 19, p. 92. † Ibid., No. 18, p. 91.
‡ Ibid., p. 95.

necessarily under the same category. In this way, quite naturally and quite consistently, Lord Mayo included in the things the Ameer was 'not to have,' all of the following miscellaneous items: (1) no Treaty, (2) no fixed subsidy, (3) no European troops, officers, or Residents, (4) no domestic pledges. Some of these are things which he wanted to get; others, are things which he particularly wanted to avoid. He wanted to have an unconditional Treaty, offensive and defensive. He wanted to have a fixed subsidy. He wanted to have a dynastic guarantee. He would have liked sometimes to get the loan of English officers to drill his troops, or to construct his forts—provided they retired the moment they had done this work for him. On the other hand, officers 'resident' in his country as Political Agents of the British Government were his abhorrence. Yet all these things are classified by Lord Mayo, quite correctly, as equally belonging to the list of proposals which had been considered, or thought of, and had been decided in the negative.

"Advantage has been taken of this by some supporters of the Government, and apparently by the Under-Secretary of State for India, in the late debates of the House of Commons, to argue that all the items in this list were equally things which the Ameer wanted 'to have:' thus representing Shere Ali as consumed by a desire to have British officers as Residents in his cities. This is by no means an unnatural mistake for any one to make who had no independent knowledge of the subject, and who derived all he knew of it from reading by itself the particular paragraph of Lord Mayo's Despatch to which I have referred. But it seems to me to be a mistake wholly inexcusable on

the part of any official of the Indian Department, because not even the personal recollections of Colonel Burne and of Captain Grey go the length of representing the Ameer as desirous of having British officers resident as Political Agents in his cities. The utmost length to which their evidence goes, even if it were wholly uncontradicted, is that Shere Ali would have submitted to the residence of British officers in certain cities, as the price of benefits which he could not otherwise secure.

"But unjustified as this contention is, even on the unsupported testimony of these two officers, and unjustified also even on the 22nd paragraph of Lord Mayo's Despatch of July 1st, it is at once refuted by Lord Mayo's letter to me, quoted in the text, of the 3rd of June, 1869. That letter was expressly written to warn me against misapprehensions prevalent on the subject of his engagements with the Ameer. In this letter there was no possibility of mistake. The list he gives is a list of the 'pledges given by him' to the Ameer. The first pledge was that of non-interference in his affairs. The second pledge was that 'we would support his independence.' The third pledge was 'that we would not force European officers, or Residents, upon him, against his wish.'

"This is the pledge, given on the honour of the Crown, which has been violated by the present Government. They have attempted to force Resident Officers upon the Ameer against his will, by threats of our displeasure, and by threats—still more discreditable—that if he did not comply, we should hold ourselves free from all the verbal and written engagements of Lord Lawrence, of Lord Mayo, and of Lord Northbrook.

"It had been my intention to close this work with the Treaty of Berlin. A purely Indian War would not naturally have fallen within its scope. But the Afghan War of 1878 was not an Indian War in its origin. The cost and the burden of it are to be thrown on the people of India, although that cost is the price of a divided Bulgaria, and of a 'real military frontier' for a phantom Turkey. It is a mere sequel of the policy of the Government on the Turkish Question in Europe and in Asia. I have, therefore, been compelled to deal with it. In doing so, I have been compelled to deal with transactions which, as it seems to me, can only be read with a sense of humiliation by every man who values the honour of his country. If this be so, no 'overwhelming majorities' in Parliament, and no successful campaigns against half-barbarous tribes, can compensate the country for the guilt into which it has been led, or protect the Government from the censure of posterity.

"ARGYLL.

"CANNES, *January*, 1879."

BY THE DUKE OF ARGYLL.

In Two Vols. large post 8vo, price 24s.

THE EASTERN QUESTION

FROM THE TREATY OF PARIS, 1856, TO THE TREATY OF BERLIN, 1878, AND TO THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR.

Opinions of the Press.

The Times.

"The Duke of Argyll's two large volumes on the Eastern Question form the most exhaustive brief which has yet been prepared for the service of the Opposition. Liberal Members must be very dull indeed if they fail to draw from the Duke's pages a formidable indictment of what the Government has done in dealing with Turkey, Russia, and Afghanistan. Many Blue Books are analysed with great skill; the arguments are stated in a style which may sometimes lack elegance, but never force; and the whole book is spiced with invective of astonishing vehemence and strength. We congratulate the Opposition on the immense industry of its champion. It is very doubtful whether there is another European country in which so eminent a public man would take such prodigious pains to strip every vestige of sagacity and political morality off the reputation of a Ministry."

The Saturday Review.

"Of all the literary assailants of the Government the Duke of Argyll is the most formidable. . . . . A powerful and passionate attack on the Eastern Policy of the Government."

The Daily News.

"The Duke of Argyll has rendered a useful service to the constituencies, who will shortly be called upon to pronounce on the Eastern Policy of the Government, in drawing up a detailed review, mainly from Official Documents, of our relations with Turkey since the Treaty of Paris, and with Afghanistan since the first Afghan War. . . . . The whole narrative is so lucid that it is an invaluable contribution to a clear understanding of the question. Though the writer characterizes some of the proceedings on which he has to comment in plain and strong language, his work is conspicuous for its fairness. He brings no charge which he does not substantiate by references to documents which are at the reader's command."

The Daily Telegraph.

"The Duke of Argyll has written a work which will form an important addition to the literature already bearing upon British Policy in the East. Historically exhaustive, the book presents a great array fo facts systematically arranged."

The Observer.

"Essentially an arraignment of the policy of the Government in regard to the Eastern Question since the year 1876, the present work differs from all previous manifestoes on the subject emanating from the opponents to Lord Beaconsfield, not so much on account of the novelty of its views as by reason of its completeness from an historical point of view."

The Echo.

"The Duke of Argyll has drawn up a damning indictment against the Government, which is simply unanswerable. . . . Those who will have to take an active part in the coming struggle will find in these volumes an ample storehouse of weapons, offensive and defensive."

The Nonconformist.

"The thoroughness with which the Duke of Argyll has treated his subject is so complete that, so far as we can judge, nothing is left unsaid—no matter of importance is reserved for others to investigate. . . . He sheds a clear steady light upon the most obscure and dubious passages in our foreign policy since the accession of the present Government to power; and he exposes the folly and wickedness of that policy with the force of a resistless logic—a logic from which apparently there is no possibility of appeal or escape."

The Scotsman.

"The most elaborate, the most closely reasoned, and, it may be fairly added, the most masterly indictment of the Eastern policy of the present Government that has yet been drawn up."

The Edinburgh Daily Review.

"By far the most exhaustive and intelligible account of British relations to the Eastern Question which has ever yet been presented to the public."

The Sheffield Independent.

"Nothing that has come from the pen of his Grace the Duke of Argyll has put his countrymen under such weighty obligations as has this work. . . . . Its style is such as will secure for it a permanent place in our literature."

The Dundee Advertiser.

"A masterly presentation of the case of the Opposition against the foreign policy of the Government. . . . . It is the fullest record in a convenient form that has yet been given of the events that have transpired since 1876."

The Bath Herald.

"These volumes will stand before posterity as the crushing indictment of the Foreign Policy of the Government at the bar of history, and will serve those candid minds who are really desirous to go into the facts and form as dispassionate a judgment as they can. . . . . Mr. Disraeli went to the ballot boxes in 1874 with the promise of 'a spirited Foreign Policy.' The Duke of Argyll's *Eastern Question* will tell to the voters at the next General Election how he has carried out his promise, and has inflicted a humiliation and disgrace upon England in the eyes of Europe which it has not suffered since Van Tromp swept the Thames with a broom at his masthead."

STRAHAN & CO. LIMITED, 34 *Paternoster Row.*

RD 239.