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# LORD LYTTON'S

# INDIAN ADMINISTRATION

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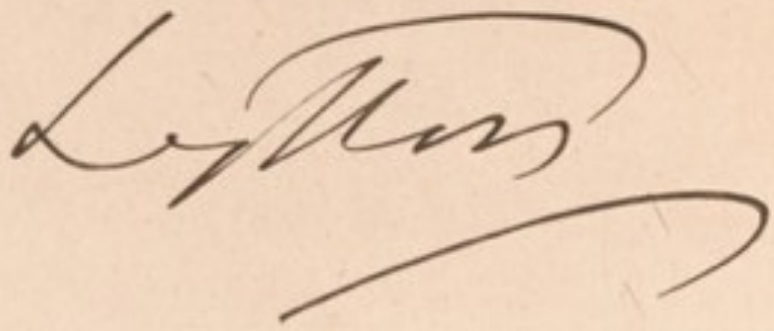

# THE HISTORY of LORD LYTTON'S INDIAN ADMINISTRATION, 1876 to 1880: compiled from Letters and Official Papers.

BY

Lady Elizabeth Edith (Bulwer-Lytton) Balfour
Lady Betty Balfour

Interdepartmental Committee for the Regulation of Foreign Publications

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
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# PREFACE

THIS History of Lord Lytton's Indian Administration has been drawn up in compliance, as far as circumstances permitted, with the instructions in my father's will, which were as follows: 'I request my wife to endeavour to obtain the assistance of some statesman or writer, in whose ability and character she has confidence, for the production of a complete record of my Indian Administration.' With this request at heart my mother first turned to Sir John Strachey, my father's colleague and most loyal friend, who responded to her appeal with cordial zeal. Into his hands were placed all the private and official documents of Lord Lytton's Viceroyalty, and no man was more highly qualified to deal with them than he. Unfortunately, illness interrupted his fulfilment of this task, and his medical advisers forbade his undertaking any arduous work. His assistance, however, in the preparation of this book has been invaluable. The first chapters owe much to his pen, and his advice throughout has been continually sought, and ungrudgingly given.

The materials collected and preserved by my father in connection with his work in India were so

ample, his letters, both private and official, so detailed and consecutive, as to form in themselves an almost complete record of his administration. When Sir John Strachey was obliged to relinquish the task of writing the history, it seemed best to make such selections from these documents, and so to connect them in chronological order, as to constitute a narrative in Lord Lytton's own words of the events with which he was concerned. At my mother's request I undertook to carry out this scheme. Where letters, minutes, and despatches required to be supplemented it was possible to supply the connecting links from the official records at the India Office, of which free use has been made.

When the preliminary work was accomplished of sifting the materials and selecting the portions which seemed most adequately to tell the story, I sought the assistance of several of my father's colleagues in the Indian Government in whom I knew he had placed confidence, and for whom he felt a personal friendship. From all those to whom I appealed I have received the most generous and effective help, not only in the way of advice and criticism, but also of substantive contribution.

Sir Alfred Lyall has given me leave to quote from his published writings on the events detailed in this book, and in those chapters which relate to my father's frontier policy and negotiations with Afghanistan I have had the benefit of his intimate knowledge of all the circumstances.

To Sir Charles Elliott and Sir Stuart Bayley I owe

the three chapters on Internal Administration, and material assistance in the chapter dealing with the famine of 1877.

My gratitude to those who have thus helped me may be best expressed by the conviction that but for them the present work would never have been published, and that it owes to them whatever may be of value in the book apart from my father's own writings.

The narrative is presented to the public as a contribution rather to history than biography. It does not deal with my father's personal life in India, but with his opinions and acts with regard to the public questions which came before him during the years in which he held the greatest post in the service of the Crown that can fall to an Englishman.

On the other hand, the method adopted in presenting the narrative necessarily tends to emphasize the aspects of it which are personal to Lord Lytton, and may possibly seem in a measure to subordinate the part played by others. I think it only right, therefore, to say that nothing could be more foreign to his wishes and feelings. His language, by letters and word of mouth, always abounded in expressions of admiration for those who shared with him the responsibilities and labours of office, and his gratitude kept pace with his praise.

I trust it will be acknowledged that the impartial tone of this book has been studiously preserved, in the earnest desire not to revive the virulent party bitterness which perverted so much of the criticism on

Lord Lytton's policy eighteen years ago, and which to this day has prevented it from receiving any measure of fair play. The present narrative gives to the public, for the first time, the true inner history of an administration which has been greatly criticised, yet little understood. It is hoped that a knowledge of the authentic facts may lead to a calm and just appreciation of an Englishman who, as he always regarded above all other objects the welfare of his country, devoted to that end in his various offices the services of his whole working life.

BETTY BALFOUR

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# LORD LYTTON'S INDIAN ADMINISTRATION

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THE most important public post ever held by Lord Lytton was offered to him at a time when he was contemplating the immediate close of his official career. He was then only forty-four years of age, but having two years previously succeeded, on the death of his father, to the title and family estate, his longing desire was to retire from public life, and devote the remainder of his days to the exclusive pursuit of literature and his home duties. In the spring of 1875 he had been appointed Minister of Legation at Lisbon, and this he intended to be his last diplomatic post.

The Governorship of Madras had been offered to him early in this year; this he had refused after consulting his medical adviser, who solemnly assured him that the constitutional delicacy from which he suffered was of a kind to be specially aggravated and increased by the climate and work in India, and that he could not with safety accept such a post.

On November 23, 1875, he received the following letter from the Prime Minister:

*Mr. Disraeli to Lord Lytton*

'2 Whitehall Gardens, S.W.: November 23, 1875.

'My dear Lytton,—Lord Northbrook has resigned the Viceroyalty of India, for purely domestic reasons, and will return to England in the spring.

'If you be willing, I will submit your name to the Queen as his successor. The critical state of affairs in Central Asia demands a statesman, and I believe if you will accept this high post you will have an opportunity, not only of serving your country, but of obtaining an enduring fame.

'Yours sincerely,

'B. DISRAELI.'

To this letter Lord Lytton replied:

*Lord Lytton to Mr. Disraeli*

'Lisbon: December 1, 1875.

'My dear Mr. Disraeli,—No man was ever so greatly or surprisingly honoured as I am by your splendid offer, nor could any man possibly feel prouder than I do of an honour so unprecedented, or more deeply anxious to deserve it.

'But I should ill requite your generous confidence were I to accept the magnificent and supremely important post for which you are willing to recommend me to the Queen, without first submitting to your most serious consideration a circumstance which cannot be already known to you, and in which you will probably recognise a paramount disqualification.'

He then went on to explain that the condition of his health would, he feared, at times render him incapable of prolonged mental labour coupled with

anxiety, and, at any rate, prevent him from counting on the enjoyment of that physical soundness and strength which might otherwise have helped to counteract his inexperience of all *administrative* business and his ignorance at the outset of Indian affairs. This consideration he urged not upon private but upon public grounds: 'I assure you most earnestly,' he wrote, 'that if, with the certainty of leaving my life behind me in India, I had a reasonable chance of also leaving there a reputation comparable to Lord Mayo's, I would still without a moment's hesitation embrace the high destiny you place within my grasp. But the gratitude, industry, and *will* which must help me to compensate all my other deficiencies afford no guarantee against this physical difficulty. I am persuaded that you will not misunderstand the hesitation and anxiety it causes me. . . . If there be reasons unknown to me which, upon purely public grounds (the only ones I would ask you to consider), still dispose you to incur such a risk, an intimation from you to that effect will relieve me from all hesitation. In that case, and in that case only, I shall regard your letter, not as an offer which I can decline, compatibly with my intense appreciation of the undeserved honour it involves, but as a high and glorious command, which it would be a dereliction of duty to disobey.'

The answer to this letter was telegraphed on December 20:

*Mr. Disraeli to Lord Lytton*

'Hatfield: December 20, 1875.

'We have carefully considered your letter, and have not changed our opinion. We regard the matter as settled.'

On January 7, 1876, Lord Salisbury, then Secretary of State for India, telegraphed to Lord Lytton:

'Announcement of your appointment has been officially made and well received. Very important that you should come home soon, as many preparations to be made and much business to be transacted.'

Lord Lytton prepared to leave Lisbon at once, and was in England by the end of January. His wife and children followed him as soon as possible, and he undertook to sail for India by March 20.

Writing to an intimate friend on the eve of his departure from Portugal, he said: 'I have the courage of the coward in front of battle, and shall march on with an unflinching step.' The decision he had taken was one, he knew, which involved the temporary farewell to all that was most cherished and pleasant in the life he had laid out for himself; but whatever the fate now before him, he could face it with the knowledge that he had neither rashly courted nor selfishly shirked it. In the first year and a half of his sojourn in India few could know or understand the extent of the physical misery which he endured. But the breakdown which he had dreaded never came, and the often ailing condition of his health was not allowed to interrupt or interfere with the work he had undertaken. From the moment that he accepted the appointment he set himself to grapple with the subjects with which in the future he would have to deal. He began, as he expressed himself to a friend, 'knowing nothing of India except its myths.' Shortly after his arrival in England, after holding interviews with his friends of the Cabinet, Mr. Disraeli, Lord Salisbury, and Lord Carnarvon, he writes: 'The work is over-

whelming, and most puzzling and strange to me, but intensely interesting.'

Before entering upon the narrative of Lord Lytton's Indian administration it is necessary to give some account of the situation, especially with regard to the foreign policy of the Indian Government and its relations with the frontier State of Afghanistan, such as it was left by Lord Northbrook on his retirement.

Summary of events preceding Lord Northbrook's resignation

The importance of keeping Russia at a distance from the North-West Frontier of India, by establishing barriers against the advance of her power and the spread of her influence, has been recognised by successive Indian governments ever since the beginning of the century. It is only with regard to the proper methods and measures for attaining these objects that opinions have differed. The gradual growth and recent development of two distinct schools, representing two different policies advocated for dealing with affairs beyond our frontier, have been recently summarised by Sir Alfred Lyall in the following terms:

'Up to the era of the Napoleonic wars, and so long as India was only accessible from Europe by sea, the continental politics of Asia gave the English in India very little concern. The limits of our possessions were still far distant from the natural or geographical boundaries of the country over which our dominion was gradually expanding. But from the beginning of this century, when it became known that Napoleon was seriously entertaining the project of an expedition by land against British India, the project of fortifying ourselves against any such invasion from the north-west by a system of alliances with the Asiatic powers beyond the Indus and the

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Afghan mountains occupied successive Governors-General. The first Afghan War was a rash and premature attempt to carry out this system. The disastrous result cooled for many years the ardour of the party who insisted on the paramount necessity of establishing, by friendly means if possible, otherwise by the display of armed superiority, our influence over the rough, recalcitrant, liberty-loving people of Afghanistan. Ten years later, when the English had crossed the Indus and the Russians were hovering about the Oxus, the prospect of a rapid approximation of the two rival empires grew much more distinct. But within India we had then much on our hands. Nor was it until the country had been finally pacified after the Sepoy Mutiny that the question of barring the further advance of Russia again took shape, and prominence. The policy of setting up barriers against a powerful neighbour is well known in Europe; it consists in establishing a preponderant diplomatic influence over intervening kingdoms, and in placing the weaker States or petty princes under a protectorate, or admitting them to an arrangement for the common defence. That this system is sound, and peculiarly applicable to Afghanistan and the minor chiefships beyond our north-western frontier, has never been seriously disputed; and the long controversy (which is at this moment in full vigour) has always turned entirely upon ways and means of pursuing objects that are generally admitted to be desirable. One party has declared confidently in favour of active overtures to the tribes and rulers beyond our borders; of pressing upon them friendly intercourse; of securing the contact of their external relations; of inducing them to receive missions, to enter into co-operative alliances, to acknowledge our

protection, and to admit British Residents, and British Agents. No time is to be lost, and no efforts spared, in the resolute employment of all those devices whereby civilised powers have, since the days of the Romans, gradually imposed their supremacy upon barbarous neighbours. Historical Summary

'The other party has never denied the expediency or possible necessity of these measures. But whereas on the one side there has been a constant demand for the speedy execution of the policy, for distinct steps forward to be taken without delay, for urgent overtures to Afghan Amirs, for operating by pressure where persuasion seemed to work too slowly, for intimating to suspicious chiefs that when friendly offers were rejected there might be force in reserve, on the other side these demands were opposed by politicians of the more cautious school as hasty and undeniably hazardous. "Your conciliatory advances," they argued, "must be expected to fail among jealous and intractable folk who only wish to be left alone, and who know as well as you do that protection means supremacy in disguise, and that intercourse with the English spells intervention. So that the rejection of your friendly overtures will most probably become merely the formalities preliminary to some masterful action which will damage your popularity, and will entangle you in new responsibilities, military and political, still further beyond your ever-moving frontiers. If we really desire so to gain the confidence of the Afghans that they may in an emergency stand by us and against our enemies, we must abstain from forcing our friendship upon them, though our relations with them ought to be civil and neighbourly. And the surest way of preventing any misunderstanding of our intentions is to keep within our own

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borders until we have just and necessary cause for a movement across them, or until the force of circumstances leads an Afghan ruler to seek or willingly accept our assistance."'[1]

The attitude last described has grown to be associated with the name of Lawrence. The opposite one has been represented with more or less difference by all those ranking themselves on the side of the *Forward Policy*. With the inauguration of this policy Lord Lytton's name must ever be associated, and despite the violent opposition it excited in his time, it is the policy which has since been almost continuously pursued by his successors.

It is one of the purposes of this book to set forth Lord Lytton's own defence of this policy; the policy of masterly inactivity having in his judgment failed to achieve the objects at which it aimed.

The following historical summary of the events which led to the situation in 1876 is given almost entirely in Lord Lytton's own words, taken from private notes written in the year 1880.

All schools of frontier policy are alike agreed that Russian influence should be excluded from Afghanistan at any cost. Lord Lawrence never doubted this. In a memorandum dated November 25, 1868, he said:

'No one, of course, can deny that the advance of Russia in Central Asia is a matter which may gravely affect the interests of England in India. No person can doubt that the approach of Russia towards our North-West Frontier in India may involve us in great difficulties; and this being the case, it will be a wise and prudent policy to endeavour to maintain a thoroughly friendly power

[1] Sir Alfred Lyall.

between India and the Russian possessions in Central Asia. Nevertheless, it appears to me clear that it is quite out of our power to reckon with any degree of certainty on the attainment of this desirable end. And,' he added, 'I feel no shadow of a doubt that, if a formidable invasion of India from the west were imminent, the Afghans *en masse*, from the Amir of the day to the domestic slave of the household, would readily join in it.'

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These were the views expressed by Lord Lawrence in 1868, when the only danger apprehended was the establishment of Russian influence in Afghanistan by forcible means, and when the public presence of the Russian power at Kabul, not as the foe, but as the avowed friend and ally of the Amir, was a danger wholly unforeseen. Nor did Lord Lawrence counsel passive acquiescence in such a situation when it actually occurred. What he contended in 1878 was, that Russia rather than Sher Ali should have been called by us to account. And in this he was consistent; for what he had advised in 1868 was, that Russia should be plainly told 'that an advance towards India beyond a certain point would entail upon her war with England in every part of the world.'

The relations between Russia and Afghanistan may be said to have commenced in the year 1870 with a complimentary letter from General Kaufmann to the Amir. It was entirely colourless; and it was answered by the Amir in terms suggested by the Viceroy of India, who found in it no ground for objection. But the letters of the Russian Governor-General gradually assumed a tone more practical and more significant; and in the summer of 1872 he addressed to Sher Ali a communication about

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the boundaries of Bokhara which caused considerable sensation in the Kabul Durbar. The Amir, who was much alarmed by it, immediately forwarded this letter to the Viceroy, with a confidential message, the terms of which were transmitted to the Government of India through our native agent. In this message the Amir drew attention to the wish of the Russian authorities to establish 'a regular and frequent correspondence with the Kabul Government,' and to the fact that they now styled the Afghan State their 'neighbour,' 'oblivious of the fact that Bokhara and Khiva intervened'; and the message closed with an entreaty to the British Government to 'bestow more serious attention than they have hitherto done on the establishment and maintenance of the boundaries of Afghanistan.'

This appeal was made to the British Government in 1872; and in reply to it the Amir was advised to thank General Kaufmann for the friendly sentiments of a letter which had caused His Highness so much uneasiness. For the purpose of reassuring him the Viceroy expressed to the Amir his confident belief that the assurances given by Russia to England in regard to Afghanistan would be strictly and faithfully adhered to.[1] Nevertheless, General Kaufmann continued his correspondence, and in the autumn of the same year the Russian officer acting for him at Tashkend informed the Afghan Governor of Balkh of the desire of the Russian Government 'that the relations between the Russians and Afghans should become more firm and consolidated daily.' This while 'positive assurances' were being given by the Russian Govern-

[1] In 1869 the Russian Government had assured Lord Clarendon that they looked upon Afghanistan as completely outside the sphere of Russian influence.

ment to the English Foreign Office that the 'Imperial Cabinet continues to consider Afghanistan as entirely beyond its sphere of action.' Historical Summary

Again the Amir was informed by the Viceroy that the British Government in nowise shared or approved his dissatisfaction at the increasing frequency and significance of these unsolicited communications. His Highness consequently ceased to consult the British Government about them, and in the winter of 1873 the acting Governor-General of Russian Turkestan appears to have considered himself in a position to address Sher Ali as a subordinate ally of the Russian Government. 'I entertain the hope,' he wrote, 'that the high Governor-General will not refuse your request, and that he will represent to H.M. the Emperor your endeavour to become worthy of the grace of my august Master.'

At the close of that year the Amir's disregarded apprehensions had been justified by the Russian conquest of Khiva. From the Governor-General of British India, to whom he had so recently confided those apprehensions, he received no communication whatever on that rapid realisation of them which closely concerned his interests and deeply affected his feelings. But from the Governor-General of Russian Turkestan he received a long communication, frankly recognising in the fall of Khiva an event which His Highness could not reasonably be expected to regard with indifference. Sher Ali did not consult the Viceroy about his reply to General Kaufmann. And this was only natural; for he must have clearly gathered, first from the language, and then from the silence of the Viceroy, that on this matter the views and feelings of the British Government were altogether different from his own. But it was immediately after

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Sher Ali's receipt of General Kaufmann's communication about Khiva that the first significant change occurred in the tone of his own communications with the Viceroy. Till then no Amir of Kabul had ever ventured to address the Viceroy of India in letters not written in the Amir's own name and bearing the Amir's own signature. Disregarding this established etiquette, Sher Ali now, for the first time, addressed the Viceroy indirectly, through one of the Afghan Ministers, in a form for which there was absolutely no precedent. While Sher Ali was thus beginning to display his estrangement from the Government of India, these are the terms in which he was addressed by the Government of Russian Turkestan in the spring of 1873:

'I hope,' writes the Russian authority at Tashkend, 'that after your death Sirdar Abdullah Jan will follow your example and make himself an ally and friend of the Emperor'—the ally and friend, that is, of a Power pledged to treat Afghanistan as a State entirely beyond the sphere of its influence! This letter was quickly followed by another from General Kaufmann himself on the same subject. 'I hope,' writes the Russian Governor-General, 'that the chain of friendship now existing between Russia and Afghanistan will in future increase and become firm, owing to the recent alliance between the Emperor of Russia and the Queen of England;' and he adds: 'I doubt not that this alliance of the two Powers will be an omen for those countries which are under the protection of the Emperor of Russia and the Queen of England.'

While appreciating the skill with which a matrimonial alliance between two reigning houses is here represented as a political alliance between two

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empires, and the significant anxiety of the writer to convey assurances which would have come more naturally from the Viceroy of India, European readers might not be disposed to attach to the phraseology of this letter any special importance. But Asiatics are accustomed to weigh such utterances with scrupulous attention; and its native agent at Kabul reported to the Government of India that on the receipt of this letter the Kabul Durbar observed: 'The Russian Government has now made itself partner in the protection of Afghanistan.'

An event now occurred which Lord Lytton considered to be the turning-point in our relations with Afghanistan. In the year 1873 Sher Ali reviewed his position. There was much in it which, rightly or wrongly, had caused him increasing anxiety; and finding in recent occurrences significant indications of future contingencies, he appears to have then wisely realised the inevitable necessity of accepting closer and more subordinate relations with one or other of his two great European neighbours. To us his preference was given. And in 1873 the Amir made a last effort to obtain from the British Government more definite and practical protection from the unsolicited patronage of Russia.

The Envoy sent by the Amir of Kabul to confer with the Viceroy of India at Simla in 1873 said to Lord Northbrook: 'Whatever specific assurances the Russians may give, and however often these may be repeated, the people of Afghanistan can place no confidence in them, and will never rest satisfied unless they are assured of the aid of the British Government.'

The Viceroy telegraphed home, and proposed to assure him that the Government would help the Amir

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with money, arms, and troops, if necessary, to repel an unprovoked invasion, if he unreservedly accepted our advice in foreign affairs. But the Duke of Argyll entirely declined to sanction any such undertaking; and the Viceroy could only promise the Envoy to assist him in any circumstances with advice, assure him that a Russian invasion of Afghanistan was not apprehended, and offer to supply him with a certain quantity of arms. But the possibility of direct invasion was by no means the only danger anticipated by the Afghan Envoy, although the point on which he desired to be satisfied was whether he might count on the English to defend him against actual aggression. He said also, and he said it very distinctly, that the Amir contemplated with serious anxiety the inevitable result of those unceasing and increasing endeavours which, in the circumstances explained by the Envoy, the Russian authorities at Tashkend, if not checked by our intervention, were certain to make for the acquisition and exercise of some influence in his kingdom. To these representations no direct reply was given; but the Amir was told that the Government of India thought it highly desirable that a British officer should be deputed to examine the northern boundaries of Afghanistan, and to communicate with His Highness at Kabul regarding the measures necessary for the frontier's security. The Amir's reply, which plainly, though in reserved language, indicated disappointment at the failure of his negotiations for a defensive alliance against Russia, merely stated that there were general objections to European travellers in his country.

To those who look back, after the lapse of twenty-five years, upon these transactions there can be no doubt that the refusal of the British Ministry

to entertain Sher Ali's request for an assurance of protection was fraught with very serious consequences, and that the departure of the Afghan Envoy was followed, in effect, by the rupture of friendly relations at Kabul.

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In 1873 Sher Ali had the sense to perceive in time that Afghanistan could not permanently stand alone, and that sooner or later she must openly and practically throw in her lot with that Power which might prove, not only best able, but also most willing, to befriend and assist her. Recent events, to which the British Government appeared indifferent, had convinced him that the time was at hand when her final choice must be made; and he was disposed to give his alliance to the highest bidder for it. Russia was apparently the most willing, and she was obviously the best able, to make the highest bid. When Sher Ali found the British Government so undisguisedly afraid of increasing its liabilities on his behalf, and so apparently disinclined to contract with him any closer or more responsible relations, it is not surprising that he should have accepted Russia's repeated assurance of her constant desire to consolidate and tighten what General Kaufmann correctly called the chain of her friendship with him—that chain which, to use the Amir's own expression, eventually dragged not only Afghanistan, but India also, into a 'sea of troubles.'

At all events, after the return to Kabul of Sher Ali's Envoy in 1873 there was a marked change for the worse in the Amir's attitude towards the Government of India, and less than two years later there was a very important change in the character of his relations with the Government of Russian Turkestan. In the second week of September 1875 a native

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Russian Envoy arrived for the first time at Kabul, and was entertained there with marked consideration, as the confidential bearer of verbal communications and a letter from General Kaufmann. From that time forward the Russian Governor-General was, for all practical purposes, permanently represented at Kabul, in the most efficacious manner, by relays of special Envoys, the one arriving as the other left. The Government of India was informed by its officiating Commissioner at Peshawur that the business of these Envoys, whatever it might be, could not be ascertained by our native agent at Kabul, because it was conducted directly and secretly with the Amir himself, and not with the Durbar. 'But,' he observed, 'the meaning of these frequent communications from Russia is obviously to establish friendly relations with the Afghans, and gain them over to an alliance with Russia. As soon as one agent is preparing to take his departure another comes.'

In March 1874 there was a change of Ministry in England; Mr. Disraeli became Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury became Secretary of State for India, and Lord Derby Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

While the Russian Government continued to give our Foreign Office persistent assurances that no military movement in the Transcaspian countries was contemplated or would be countenanced, Russian advance in the direction of Merv was nevertheless steadily pursued.

In the autumn of 1874 the submission of several of the Turkoman tribes to Russia was announced, and the Ambassador at St. Petersburg reported that the whole of the country between Khiva and the Attrek was regarded as annexed to Russia. In

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1875 a military 'reconnaissance' of the Turkoman steppe started from Krasnovodsk in July, in what was called 'a most amicable spirit,' and although, in consequence, it may be presumed, of the Emperor's orders, which had been communicated to our Government, no actual occupation of fresh territory in the direction of Merv took place, the nominal submission to Russia of the Akhal Tekke tribe was reported to have been obtained; and the movements of General Lomakin, which continued for several months, led to renewed rumours that a serious expedition was contemplated. More important events occurred in another quarter. Since the occupation of Samarkand, in 1868, there had been little interference with the Khanate of Khokand, lying to the east of Khojend and Tashkend; but in the autumn of 1875, in consequence of aggressions upon Russian territory, General Kaufmann marched on Khokand. The result of the operations that followed was the formal declaration that the whole of Khokand had been incorporated in the Russian dominions under the name of the province of Ferghana.

All these proceedings continued to convince the British Government that the advance of Russia towards the Afghan frontier threatened to involve us before long in dangerous difficulties; and the matter had now become still more serious because the outbreak of the insurrection in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the summer of 1875 had shown the probability that the Eastern Question was again about to be opened in Europe. This probability became before long a certainty.

Under these circumstances the undisguised ill-feeling towards us of the Amir Sher Ali Khan, com-

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bined with the apparent certainty that the time was not now far distant when the frontiers of the Russian Empire would be brought into close proximity with those of Afghanistan, became a cause of the gravest anxiety.

The most unsatisfactory and dangerous part of the position was this—that while Russian intercourse with the Amir of Kabul grew daily more free and frequent, we were in a condition of almost complete ignorance regarding everything that was passing in Afghanistan and in the countries immediately beyond its borders. This ignorance had long been admitted and regretted. Lord Dalhousie had made it one of the stipulations of his Treaty with Dost Mohammed, in 1857, that British officers should be deputed, at the pleasure of the British Government, to Kabul, Kandahar, and Balkh, to see that the military subsidy given to the Amir was properly expended. They were to be withdrawn when the subsidy should have ceased; and although the Amir thought it undesirable that they should be sent to Kabul, he entirely approved of their presence at Kandahar. In 1859 our Government had come to the conclusion, although it was not carried into effect, that a British agent ought to be established at Herat, then independent of Kabul. Lord Lawrence, in 1868, recorded the opinion that one of the conditions on which it was desirable to give assistance to Sher Ali in consolidating his power was that he should consent to our sending at any time native agents to Kandahar, Herat, or other places on the frontier. Lord Mayo recorded the opinion that it was desirable that we should have an English representative at Kabul, and that, although he found it inexpedient to insist upon this measure, he did

not think that the difficulties in the way of carrying it out were likely to be permanent. Lastly, in 1873, the Government of Lord Northbrook proposed, as we have seen, the temporary deputation of a British officer to examine the boundaries of Afghanistan.

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Although the importance of obtaining better means of information regarding the course of events in Afghanistan and on its frontiers had thus been repeatedly acknowledged, our Government had, nevertheless, thought it undesirable to press the matter on the Amir.

Note by Sir Bartle Frere

An important Note on this subject was written by Sir Bartle Frere, who was then a member of the Secretary of State's Council. He insisted strongly on the dangers into which, as it appeared to him, we were drifting, and pointed out the measures of precaution which he believed to be necessary. The most important of these were the appointment of British officers on the frontiers of Afghanistan and Central Asia, and the occupation of Quettah. In regard to the first measure, Sir Bartle Frere's Note proved that it was very desirable, but gave no aid towards overcoming the difficulties. The latter step he recommended because its adoption would give us a far stronger frontier, and because he looked forward to the inevitable contingency of our having, at some future time, to meet Russia on the western borders of Afghanistan. There can be no doubt that Sir Bartle Frere's Note had a great effect in convincing Her Majesty's Government that the state of affairs had become extremely serious, and on January 22, 1875, a despatch exhibiting their anxiety was addressed by Lord Salisbury to the Government of Lord Northbrook.

In this despatch he commented on the scantiness

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of the information which the Viceroy received through the Kabul Diaries, and remarked that for knowledge of what passed in Afghanistan and upon its frontiers the Government were compelled to rely mainly upon the indirect intelligence which reached them through the Foreign Office. Lord Salisbury then went on to point out that our native agent, however intelligent and honest, was in the nature of things disqualified to collect the information which the Government of India required. 'One of the principal qualifications,' he said, 'for this function is the neutrality of feeling in respect to religious controversies which only a European can possess.'

Lord Salisbury's Despatch 1875

He therefore urged the Viceroy to take measures, 'with as much expedition as the circumstances of the case permit, for procuring the assent of the Amir to the establishment of a British Agency at Herat,' adding, 'when this is accomplished it may be desirable to take a similar step with regard to Kandahar. I do not suggest any similar step with respect to Kabul, as I am sensible of the difficulties which are interposed by the fanatic violence of the people.'

The importance attached to an English Agency at Herat was, primarily, for the sake of the information an English officer might collect; but it would also be an indication of English solicitude for the safety of our allies, and might so tend to discourage counsels dangerous to the peace of Asia.

Lord Northbrook's reply

Lord Northbrook's Government replied to this despatch on June 7, 1875. They considered that the value of the reports received from the native agent at Kabul had been under-estimated; that it was probable that information regarding the Turkestan frontier would be obtained with greater

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promptness and accuracy through Persia than through Afghanistan; that it was doubtless true that the position of the agent compelled him to be cautious in communicating news to the British Government; but that, making due allowance for the difficulty of his position, the information supplied by him was fairly full and accurate. While it was thought that either the Amir or his Minister, during the conference at Umballa, had expressed, in confidential conversations, a readiness to accept at some future time, not far distant, the presence of British agents in Afghanistan, excepting at Kabul itself, it was pointed out that no formal record of the alleged admission existed, and that its scope and intention were uncertain, and that Lord Mayo had distinctly informed the Amir 'that no European officers would be placed as Residents in his cities.' Under these circumstances the Government of India held that they would not be justified in founding any representation to the Amir regarding the appointment of a British agent at Herat upon the assumption that he had formerly expressed his willingness to agree to such an arrangement. It was shown that, in the opinion of all the officers most likely to form a correct judgment on the subject, the Amir would certainly be altogether disinclined to receive a British agent, and if he should give an unwilling consent no advantage would be gained from the proposed measure. If, on the other hand, he should refuse, his refusal would impair the influence of the British Government in Afghanistan, and would weaken the hands of Her Majesty's Government in any future negotiations with Russia. 'At the same time,' it was said, 'we agree with Her Majesty's Government that, having regard to the present aspect of affairs in Turkestan,

it would be desirable that a British officer should be stationed at Herat.' But for the successful realisation of this end it was essential that the proposed arrangement should have the cordial consent of the Amir. Believing that this consent could not possibly be obtained, the Government of Lord Northbrook concluded that 'the present time and circumstances are unsuitable for taking the initiative in such a matter.'

They advised that no immediate pressure should be put upon the Amir, or particular anxiety shown upon the subject, but that advantage should be taken of the first favourable opportunity that his own action or other circumstances might present for the purpose of sounding his disposition, and of representing to him the benefits which would be derived by Afghanistan from the proposed arrangement. The object in view was, in their judgment, more likely to be attained by taking this course than by assuming the initiative at once.

Lord Salisbury's Second Despatch

The Government at home was little disposed to accept this opinion of the Government of India, that it was inexpedient to put any immediate pressure on the Amir of Afghanistan to induce him to enter into new arrangements, and on November 19, 1875, a further despatch was sent to India by Lord Salisbury, containing a complete statement of the policy which Her Majesty's Government considered it essential to carry out. In this despatch the Secretary of State recapitulated and emphasised the urgent and important grounds upon which Her Majesty's Government desired the establishment of a British agent in Afghanistan, and the Viceroy was instructed to press upon the Amir the reception of a temporary

Embassy in his capital. Neither the desirability of this object nor the strength of the reasoning in demonstration of its importance was disputable, or in fact disputed; but Lord Northbrook's Government, in their reply, insisted on the improbability that the Amir would willingly agree to the location of British officers in his country, on the impolicy of pressing the demand against his will, and on the inutility, in their opinion, of establishing agencies there without his hearty consent. This correspondence fully represents the differences of opinion which had arisen between the Government of India and the Home Government at the time of Lord Northbrook's resignation in the spring of 1876; and it will be seen that they all converge upon one main issue—whether an immediate and strenuous attempt should be made to induce the Amir to receive a Mission at Kabul for the purpose of negotiating the establishment within his dominions of a representative of the British Government. That the issue thus defined was one of extraordinary difficulty cannot in fairness be denied. The objections urged by Lord Northbrook's Government were grave and substantial; yet, on the other hand, Lord Salisbury's despatches prove that he had rightly appreciated the true situation, in treating the reception of a British diplomatic agent by the Amir as the first essential step towards improving our relations and restoring our influence with the Afghan ruler. By no other pacific measure could we hope to counteract the growth of Russian influence at Kabul, to explain our policy, or to obtain the Amir's consistent adherence to and co-operation with it; while even if the moment for beginning fresh overtures was not opportune, it was quite possible that

Lord Northbrook's reply

the situation might not improve, but the reverse, by delay. It was at this juncture, when the difficulties of the position and the conflict of opinions had reached their climax, that Lord Lytton assumed charge of the Viceroyalty in April 1876.

## CHAPTER II

### PREPARATIONS FOR INDIA—JOURNEY THITHER—FIRST NEGOTIATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN

During the time which elapsed between the nomination of Lord Lytton as Viceroy of India and his departure from England to assume charge of his office he devoted himself to the work of increasing his knowledge of Indian subjects. He studied assiduously all books and papers on recent events which the India Office could furnish, and he endeavoured to place himself in personal communication with everyone who he thought could speak with authority on the more important questions with which he would soon have to deal. A few years before he had made the acquaintance of Lord Lawrence. They had met at the house of their common friend John Forster, and they had been neighbours in Hertfordshire when Lord Lawrence was living at Brocket. They had at that time many conversations, and Lord Lytton would afterwards recall with interest much that Lord Lawrence had said to him about India, his stories of the stirring times through which he had passed, the adventures and daring deeds of our officers, and how Lord Lawrence had explained to him at length his views on a multitude of subjects connected with Indian Government, our relations with Afghanistan and the tribes on the North-Western Frontier, and with the advance of Russia through Central Asia. These

conversations were renewed when Lord Lytton was appointed Viceroy, but it had already become apparent that the policy towards Afghanistan which the Government had resolved to carry out, and which he himself believed to be right, would not have Lord Lawrence's approval, and it was difficult in such circumstances to discuss these matters freely. Lord Lytton could say nothing regarding the instructions which he knew that he was about to receive, and he could not attempt to controvert Lord Lawrence's opinions without seeming to himself to be wanting in proper deference to one of the most illustrious of Indian statesmen, for whose great actions and noble character he always felt sincere admiration and respect.[1]

[1] The obituary notice of Lord Lawrence's death published in *The Gazette of India*, June 30, 1879, was written by Lord Lytton, and ran as follows:—

'The Governor-General in Council has received, with deep concern, the announcement of the death of Lord Lawrence, late Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

'No statesman, since Warren Hastings, has administered the Government of India with a genius and an experience so exclusively trained and developed in her service as those of the illustrious man whose life, now closed in the fulness of fame, though not of age, bequeaths to his country a bright example of all that is noblest in the high qualities for which the Civil Service of India has justly been renowned; and in which, with such examples before it, it will never be deficient.

'The eminent services rendered to India by Lord Lawrence, both as ruler of the Punjab, in the heroic defence of British power, and as Viceroy, in the peaceful administration of a rescued Empire, cannot be fitly acknowledged in this sad record of the grief which she suffers by his death, and of the pride with which she cherishes his name.

'The Viceroy and Governor-General in Council, however, desiring to give some public expression to those feelings and to that national gratitude which is the best reward of national services, directs that the flag of Fort William shall, during to-morrow, the first of July, be lowered half-mast high; that thirty-one minute guns shall be fired, at sunset, from the Fort; and that the last gun shall be fired, and the flag dropped, as the sun sets.

'His Excellency in Council further directs that on this sorrowful

From no one did Lord Lytton receive at this time more wise and practically useful advice or warmer sympathy than from Sir James Stephen,[1] and during the rest of his life no man could have had a more constant or more affectionate friend. Indeed, this friendship, which may truly be said to have sprung up in a single night, became to Lord Lytton one of the closest and most valued intimacies of his later life. They first met at a dinner at Lord Arthur Russell's, and went afterwards together to the 'Cosmopolitan.' India was, of course, the subject of their talk. Lord Lytton was not more eager to hear than Sir James to tell all that he knew of the condition of that great empire. They did not part till they had spent half the night walking up and down, too absorbed in their subject to feel fatigue or the wish to separate.

Sir James Stephen

Sir James Stephen's knowledge on Indian affairs was deep, and his views so interesting to Lord Lytton, that he begged to have some recorded expression of them. Sir James went home and wrote for him an elaborate exposition of the Indian administrative system, which his friend compared to a 'policeman's bull's-eye.'[2]

From the time of Lord Lytton's departure till his return Sir James Stephen wrote to him by every mail. These letters were a constant source of pleasure, solace, and support. When he returned from his four years' rule of empire his other chief friends were

occasion the same marks of national respect shall be simultaneously shown at all the other seats of government in India; in order that, throughout the length and breadth of the Empire with whose history the fame of Lord Lawrence is imperishably associated, honour may be rendered to the memory of the Statesman who ruled India with a wisdom strengthened in her laborious service, and whose fortitude, severely tested, was splendidly displayed throughout her fiercest trial.'

[1] At this time Mr. FitzJames Stephen.

[2] *Life of Sir J. Stephen*, by his brother, Leslie Stephen.

nearly all either dead or alienated, but in Stephen he never failed to find the most loyal, faithful, and devoted friend to the day of his death. The contrast between the two men could hardly have been greater. Sir James was somewhat Johnsonian in appearance and talk; Lord Lytton singularly endowed with charm and grace of manner. In mind Lord Lytton was essentially a poet gifted with a romantic and creative imagination; Sir James had little taste for poetry, or sympathy with the 'artistic temperament' in any of its forms, but his intellectual force, his herculean capacity for work, and the strength and loyalty with which he defended his convictions and the friends who shared them, gave to his personality an heroic stamp. They had in common, despite the widest differences, a certain rather rare and sturdy manliness of thought, and an enthusiastic patriotism. Lord Lytton's admiration and sympathy for Sir James evoked in him a responsive tenderness and affection which perhaps was all the deeper for having so rarely found an outlet, while Stephen's mental attitude on all public questions, and his strong and uncompromising way of expressing whatever he felt, were to his friend a source of unending satisfaction and support.

During all this time Lord Lytton was in frequent communication with Mr. Disraeli and Lord Salisbury in regard to the affairs of Central Asia and Afghanistan. The Prime Minister strongly impressed upon the new Viceroy his opinion that the policy of Russia gave cause for extreme anxiety and watchfulness, and that it was essential, even at the risk of failure, the possibility of which could not be denied, that an attempt should be made to induce the Amir of Kabul to enter into more satisfactory relations with our Government, or, if such a result proved impracticable,

that he should at least be compelled to show clearly the attitude which he intended to hold towards Russia and towards ourselves. Anything, Mr. Disraeli thought, was better than the state of absolute uncertainty and suspicion in which our relations with Afghanistan were involved. This was the conviction of Lord Lytton himself when he left England. 'Afghanistan,' he wrote a few months afterwards in a confidential letter, 'is a State far too weak and barbarous to remain isolated and wholly uninfluenced between two great military empires such as England and Russia. The present difference between the policies of these two empires, as regards the interests of the Amir, is that the British Government sincerely desires to promote his security abroad and his stability at home. It is our policy to cultivate on our north-western border a strong bulwark, by aiding Afghanistan to become a powerful and prosperous State, provided its power be friendly to ourselves and its prosperity in harmony with that of those other frontier States whose welfare and independence we are resolved to defend against all aggression. It is our wish to see the revenues of Afghanistan increased, the authority of its ruler consolidated, the permanence of his dynasty established, the peace and loyalty of the Amir's subjects assured, the safety of his border guaranteed, the efficiency of his military force developed, his independence placed above all question, on the sole condition that his loyal friendship and that of his people for the British Government be equally indubitable. We do not covet one inch of his territory, we do not desire to diminish one iota of his independence. But we cannot allow him to fall under the influence of any power whose interests are

Lord Lytton on Afghanistan

antagonistic to our own, and thereby become the tool of ambitions to which the whole energy of the British Government will, in case of need, be resolutely opposed. On the other hand, the Russian Government, although its real policy has not been and cannot as yet be openly avowed, desires and would gladly effect the disarmament of Afghanistan and the absorption of the Amir's dominions, either by Russia alone or by Russia in conjunction with England, each of the two European powers taking, by previous agreement, its own share of the spoil. This object could be best attained by the assent and connivance of the British Government, but, failing that condition of success, its attainment will be, and indeed is already being, sought by means of adroitly playing on the hopes and fears of the Amir, and thus establishing a diplomatic influence at Kabul. The Amir, who appears to be tumbling headlong into the trap thus skilfully laid for him, under the illusion that he is strong enough, or crafty enough, to play off Russia against England and thereby maintain his equilibrium between them, must now choose which of his two powerful neighbours he will rely upon. But one lesson he will have to learn, and that is that if he does not promptly prove himself our loyal friend we shall be obliged to regard him as our enemy and treat him accordingly. A tool in the hands of Russia I will never allow him to become. Such a tool it would be my duty to break before it could be used.'[1]

We have seen that Lord Northbrook fully recognised, like all his predecessors, the paramount importance of maintaining the independence of

[1] Letter to C. Girdlestone, August 27, 1876. *Letters Despatched*, vol. i. p. 427.

Afghanistan, and of preventing the interference of Russia in its affairs. But we have also seen that, in regard to the ways and means for giving effect to these views, there had been found to be serious divergence of opinion between the Government of India and the Ministry at home. In these circumstances some embarrassment was felt in drawing for the new Viceroy the instructions which were to define our future policy in Afghan affairs, and to authorise his acting upon it. The Prime Minister and Lord Salisbury, in common with the rest of the Cabinet, held more decidedly than ever the view—and it was a view which had the complete concurrence of Lord Lytton—that it was urgently necessary that our relations with Afghanistan should no longer be suffered to remain in a condition which seemed to them full of danger. But it was felt that it would be neither expedient nor courteous to issue orders for taking steps to which the members of Lord Northbrook's Council, who would also be Lord Lytton's Councillors, had already demurred, and, under the constitution of the Indian Government, no action could be taken by the Governor-General on any instructions from home until they had been communicated to his Council in the manner prescribed by law. Instead, therefore, of the instructions of Her Majesty's Government being sent to India in the ordinary way, they were placed by Lord Salisbury in the hands of Lord Lytton when he left England, with permission to choose his own time for laying them before his colleagues.

The most important passages of these instructions relating to Afghanistan will be found in a note at the end of this chapter.

They may be summarised here as follows:

The Government at home considered it of first-

class importance to ascertain the true attitude of the Amir towards the Government of India, and as a means to this end suggested that, after communicating with the Amir, a friendly mission, combined, perhaps, with one to the Khan of Khelat, should proceed to Kabul by way of Quettah and Kandahar. In the event of the Amir refusing to receive such a mission the Government of India might find themselves obliged to reconsider their whole policy towards Afghanistan, but there would no longer be any doubt as to the Amir's estrangement. Should he, however, consent to receive it, the Government anticipated that certain questions would probably be raised upon which the Amir would ask for more definite assurances than had yet been made to him.

These questions were divided under three heads:

I. A fixed and augmented subsidy. II. A more decided recognition than has yet been accorded by the Government of India to the order of succession established by the Amir in favour of the younger son Abdullah Jan. III. An explicit pledge by treaty or otherwise of material support in case of foreign aggression.

With regard to the first of these questions the Government were prepared to leave the Viceroy a free hand to deal with it in such a manner as the circumstances and attitude of the Amir might suggest to his judgment.

With regard to the second question the Government laid down that, while they did not desire 'to renounce their traditional policy of abstention from all unnecessary interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan,' they yet considered that 'the frank recognition of a *de facto* order in the succession established by a *de facto* Government to the throne

of a foreign State' did not 'imply or necessitate any interference in the internal affairs of that State.'

With regard to the third question: 'An explicit pledge by treaty or otherwise of material support in case of foreign aggression,' the Government, while admitting that Lord Northbrook's declaration in 1875 would justify the Amir in expecting support should his kingdom be subjected to unprovoked foreign aggression, yet commented upon the fact that it was nevertheless too ambiguous to satisfy the Amir. They therefore promised to support the Viceroy should he find it necessary to make more definite declarations on this head, only reserving their right of judgment as to the circumstances involving the obligation of material assistance in some clear case of unprovoked aggression.

These instructions are remarkable for two things. First, for the latitude and freedom they leave to the Viceroy; secondly, for the manifest desire revealed in them to secure the friendship and good will of the Amir if by any means such a result were still attainable.

A few days before Lord Lytton left London he paid a visit to Count Shouvalow, in accordance with the wish the ambassador had expressed to him. The conversation that followed was remarkable. It was opened by Count Shouvalow, who informed Lord Lytton that he had made to Her Majesty's Government, through Lord Derby, the proposal that some permanent means of direct and confidential communication should be established between the Russian military forces in Central Asia and the Viceroy of India. He said that the Cabinet of St. Petersburg was seriously alarmed by the critical condition of its relations with England in regard to Central Asian affairs, that the Emperor was most

anxious to keep on good terms with us, and to restrain the greed of territory evinced by his military officers, and it was in the hope of avoiding future misunderstandings that the Russian Government had made the present suggestion. Count Shouvalow had already spoken privately to Lord Lytton on this subject, and had suggested to him that such communications might conveniently be commenced through a special agent accredited on a complimentary mission to the new Viceroy by General Kaufmann. Lord Lytton had replied that, so far as the acceptance or refusal of the proposal depended upon himself, he at once declined it on the ground that a mission from Tashkend could not reach Calcutta without passing through Afghanistan or Khelat. Count Shouvalow had sent to Prince Gortchakow a report of this conversation, and he now read to Lord Lytton the reply of the Russian Chancellor, and a confidential letter from General Kaufmann to the Russian Minister of War. The Chancellor's despatch authorised Count Shouvalow to assure Lord Lytton that Russia had no desire to approach Afghanistan from any direction, and, least of all, by way of Merv. Should her military forces, he said, be unavoidably obliged to occupy Merv, their occupation would in any case be only temporary. He added that the Russian occupation of Merv, or of any other post equally close to the frontiers of Afghanistan, really depended less upon the Government of Russia than upon the Government of India. The Tekke tribe, which acknowledged the authority and claimed the protection of the Czar, was continually harassed by Turkomans, whom the army of the Caspian was continually obliged to pursue and punish. These marauders, when captured, always averred that they

had been instigated to acts of hostility against the Tekkes by the Turkoman tribes on the Afghan frontier and presumably under the influence of the Amir of Kabul. Herein, the Chancellor wrote, lay the increasing danger of the situation, and that danger could only be averted by a more active and friendly exercise of the paramount authority which the Government of India must by this time have acquired over the Amir of Kabul, whom it openly pays and protects. It was, in short, for the Government of India to command and compel its acknowledged *protégé*, the Amir, to keep these troublesome Turkomans quiet, and Merv would then be safe from Russian occupation. The despatch concluded by pointing out how the policy thus commended to the consideration of the Government of India might be facilitated by the establishment of direct communications with General Kaufmann, and Count Shouvalow was instructed to obtain the acquiescence of Her Majesty's Government in arrangements for that purpose. The ambassador then read to Lord Lytton the letter from General Kaufmann in which this proposal appeared to have had its origin. It began with a complaint that while the Russians in Central Asia had never, *du moins sciemment*, done anything to embarrass or annoy England, the English Government in India had been sending arms and military instructors to Yarkand, with the deliberate purpose of enabling Yakub Beg to be aggressive to Russia. England and Russia, General Kaufmann said, *si sua bona nôrint*, had in Central Asia a common interest and a common foe. The interest was civilisation, the foe was Islamism. The only real danger which threatened the British power in India was Islamism. Every other was a bugbear, but this would, ere

long, reveal its formidable reality. The wise policy, therefore, would be an alliance between England and Russia; the Government of India should aid Russia cordially and openly in effecting, as soon as possible, the disarmament of Afghanistan and of the Mohammedan populations of all the States intervening between India and the Russian possessions in Central Asia, and the division of those territories between the two powers. The knowledge that there existed between Russia and England a complete understanding, for this avowed purpose, would suffice to render powerless the known disaffection of our Mohammedan subjects in India, and should they afterwards give us any trouble we should, at least, have close at hand, upon our North-Western Frontier, a powerful and friendly Christian empire, upon whose prompt co-operation we could at all times rely for the suppression of revolt. Unfortunately, instead of embracing the opportunities still open to it for the prosecution of this great defensive policy, the Government of India had hitherto been endeavouring in an underhand way to exclude Russian influence from the frontier States, and to strengthen those States against what was called Russian aggression. The fear of such aggression was caused by a misconception of the whole situation, which direct communications between Tashkend and Calcutta would, General Kaufmann trusted, suffice to rectify. Animated by these convictions, he had already prepared a complimentary letter to the new Viceroy, which he proposed to despatch through Afghanistan to the care of Sher Ali Khan, with instructions to the Amir of Kabul to forward it immediately to Peshawur, so that Lord Lytton might find it at Calcutta on his arrival. But he refrained from sending the letter

until he had ascertained, through the Russian ambassador in London, how it would be received by the Viceroy.

This letter from General Kaufmann was written in Russian, and Count Shouvalow translated it into French as he read it to Lord Lytton, without apparently suppressing any part of it. After hearing the letter, Lord Lytton asked what were the means at the disposal of General Kaufmann for sending a letter to Sher Ali Khan, and what were his guarantees for the Amir's obedience to his instructions. The ambassador, who seemed a little embarrassed by the question, replied: 'I suppose that we must have, just as you have, safe and easy means of private communication with Sher Ali. But I don't know what they are. That is Kaufmann's affair.'

Count Shouvalow then admitted that there was no foundation for the statement that military support had been given by the Government of India to Yakub Beg, and he laid great stress upon the fact that this absurd fiction had been seriously believed at St. Petersburg as proving the importance of the proposal for establishing direct communication between General Kaufmann and the Viceroy. In replying to these communications, Lord Lytton said that as the ambassador wished for a frank statement of his views he would state frankly that the British Government would tolerate no attempt on the part of General Kaufmann to obtain an influence in Afghanistan or in any of our frontier States, and that we should absolutely refuse to co-operate with Russia in any anti-Mohammedan crusade such as that which had been suggested. We regarded, he said, Afghanistan and Beloochistan as the porches of British India; we should defend them with all our power

against aggression by any foreign State; we would never knowingly allow Russia to enter into any relations with those States which might have the effect of undermining our influence over their rulers or their people, and would never become a party to any injury to our Mohammedan allies or subjects. General Kaufmann's proposed communications with the Viceroy of India could only be carried on through Afghanistan, a territory with which Russia had no right to interfere, and they were therefore inadmissible and unwarrantable. To this Count Shouvalow replied that General Kaufmann was no politician, that he was an honest soldier without political ideas, whose views must not be taken *au sérieux*, or confounded with those of the Russian Government, and that he accepted without reserve, in regard to Afghanistan, the position as Lord Lytton had defined it.

Although the ambassador thus disclaimed sympathy with the policy advocated by General Kaufmann, and only gave, on behalf of his Government, approval to the suggestion that means of direct communication might with advantage be established between the Viceroy of India and the Russian authorities in Central Asia, this interview left on the mind of Lord Lytton the conviction that Russia was desirous of coming to an understanding with England which would have led to the absorption of the States intervening between the British and Russian possessions, to the partition of Afghanistan, and the establishment of a common frontier between the two empires. His belief was strengthened soon afterwards by the publication, doubtless with the authority or sanction of the Russian Government, of an article in the 'Golos' containing the substance of General

Kaufmann's letter to the Minister of War. There can now be no question that this opinion of Lord Lytton was correct. It had become a fixed idea with Russian statesmen that in the interests of their country the most satisfactory result that could be arrived at in Central Asia would be one which brought their borders into immediate contact with our own. Nor is this view confined to those who entertain ambitious expectations of future advances upon India; it is held equally by men who desire that all existing causes of difference between Russia and England should be removed. Lord Lytton's communications with Count Shouvalow completely satisfied him on another point, in regard to which his conclusion received afterwards ample confirmation. They were thus described by him in a confidential paper written immediately after his final interview with the ambassador:

To Lord Salisbury, Feb. 26, 1876

'The Russian Government has established those means of direct, convenient, and safe communication which Sher Ali refuses to us, and which we are afraid of proposing to him, although we openly subsidise His Highness. At the same time the Russian Chancellor holds us responsible, as a matter of course, for the exercise of an authority over the Amir which we neither possess nor know how to acquire. The Russian General confidentially avows his object to be the disarmament of Afghanistan, yet he has acquired such influence at Kabul that he can not only communicate with Sher Ali Khan whenever he pleases, but also reckon with confidence upon the Amir's obedience to his instructions. England openly declares her object to be the prosperity and independence of Afghanistan, and for the furtherance of that object she subsidises its ruler; yet she has so little

influence at Kabul that she cannot induce Sher Ali to receive an agent from her Viceroy, or tolerate the passage of a British officer through his territories. Comment on these facts is, I think, superfluous. I cannot conceive a situation more fundamentally false or more imminently perilous than the one which they reveal.'

Count Shouvalow had, as he stated to Lord Lytton, made to Lord Derby the proposal to establish direct means of correspondence between the Russian authorities in Central Asia and the Viceroy in India. The views of our Government agreed with those of Lord Lytton, and the proposal was declined. These communications were on both sides verbal only. They took no official form and were not officially recorded.

The Viceroy leaves England

On March 1, 1876, Lord Lytton left England with Lady Lytton and their young daughters. Colonel (afterwards Sir Owen) Burne accompanied him as private secretary, an officer of well tried ability and Indian knowledge, who had served Lord Mayo in the same capacity. Colonel Colley, the brilliant and accomplished soldier who afterwards, as his countrymen bitterly remember, found in Africa an unhappy death, was his military secretary; and among the other officers of his suite was Sir Lewis Pelly, to whom Lord Lytton had determined to entrust the duty of conducting the negotiations which he hoped to open with the Amir of Afghanistan.

Egyptian affairs were at this time in a critical condition, the Khedive was on the verge of bankruptcy, and the French and English Governments were discussing the measures to be taken for preventing a probable catastrophe. Lord Lytton remained in Paris for a few days. He had numerous

friends and acquaintances among French statesmen, and some of his conversations with them were extremely interesting to him. One observation made to him by Thiers deserves to be repeated, for it shows the foresight of one of the keenest intellects of France in regard to a transaction which has had, and will have in the future, no small political and financial importance. The purchase of the Suez Canal shares by Mr. Disraeli's Government had just been announced, and Thiers said to Lord Lytton that he looked upon this as the cleverest thing ever done by an English Minister, and that he envied the statesman who had done it.

From Paris Lord Lytton travelled to Naples, where H.M.S. *Orontes* was waiting to take him to Bombay. He halted for a day at Bologna, and met there Sir Louis Mallet, who was on his way back from Calcutta, where he had gone on a special mission from the India Office with the object of discussing with Lord Northbrook and his Government the question, which was exciting much interest in this country, of the duties levied in India on English cotton manufactures. There was no higher authority on economical subjects than Sir Louis Mallet, and Lord Lytton was glad of the opportunity to hear from him his views on the trade and customs tariff and taxation of India, and on other questions of financial and economical importance.

On March 21 Lord Lytton landed at Alexandria. He went on at once to Cairo, where he had an interview with Ismail Pasha, the Khedive, then in the midst of the financial difficulties which afterwards led to his deposition. In a letter written at this time to Lord Derby, he expressed in strong terms the conviction, which all that he had learned

in Paris and in Cairo on this subject had impressed upon him, that if we did not immediately take into our own hands the settlement of the financial situation in Egypt our political hold upon that country might perhaps be swiftly and irretrievably lost, with serious consequences to us in India.

Impressions of Cairo

To his great regret only two days could be spared for Cairo, and there was little time for anything but business. Western civilisation had been rapidly carrying out in Egypt its beneficial and unsightly work, but in 1876 Cairo was still one of the most characteristic and picturesque of oriental cities, and the glimpses of its monuments, its streets, and its people which Lord Lytton was able to obtain filled him with admiration. They were the more delightful because they foreshadowed to his imagination the scenes that India was soon to show to him. He told in his letters to England how charmed he had been with the grace of gesture and the dignity of the Arab population, their flowing garments and statuesque draperies, the rich colouring that everywhere met the eye, and the beauty and picturesqueness of the architecture. One corner of the great bazaar especially delighted him, with 'its dim glow of infinitely varied but harmonious colours, in the noon light of an oriental sun softened by the mellow shade of fantastic awnings, while through the narrow street, in front of the little Moorish court where the carpet merchants spread their wares, a quaint crowd of men and women, in every variety of costume, was escorting with flutes and trumpets an Arab Sheikh, who had just returned in triumph from the pilgrimage to Mecca with the dignity of a Hadji.'

At Suez interest of another sort awaited Lord

Lytton. M. de Lesseps was there to receive him and to show him parts of the canal. He descanted eloquently on a project of his own for establishing, in the interests of peace and civilisation, railway communication between India and the Russian possessions in Central Asia. The intervening countries were to be divided between the two powers, and their barbarous inhabitants, Afghans and the rest, were, *faute de mieux*, to be swept away. He had been speaking about this project, M. de Lesseps said, to the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia, who was then in Egypt, and he had highly approved of it. The scheme, Lord Lytton wrote, was 'the industrial development of Kaufmann's recommendations.'

Description of the *Serapis*

On the day after his arrival at Suez he met the Prince of Wales, who was returning from his visit to India on the *Serapis*, and Lord Lytton was interested in hearing from him and from the officers who accompanied him the impressions they had formed on a multitude of Indian subjects. The ship itself was a striking object, a floating western palace laden with the products of the East. 'As Noah's Ark,' Lord Lytton wrote, 'was supposed by the Rabbis to be a type of the whole world, the *Serapis* may be regarded as a sort of picturesque epitome of the Indian empire. But the two finest specimens of Indian produce are human ones, a Sikh and an Afghan, native officers of Probyn's Horse, who are coming, for the first time of course, to England with the Prince. They are fine soldier-like fellows, who look as if they might have been born sword in hand and cradled in a military saddle. I had a pleasant thrill of patriotic pride, however, in comparing their appearance with that of their General, Probyn, as he stood before them in full uniform. You felt that the

Englishman was the finest man of the three, fitted in all respects to command these stalwart men, not only *par droit de conquête*, but also *par droit de naissance*.'

Sir Bartle Frere

Among the Prince's suite was Sir Bartle Frere. He had much to say that was deeply interesting to Lord Lytton, and he gave to him important papers containing his views on some of the questions with which the Government of India would soon have to deal.

No man living possessed a more intimate knowledge of the questions connected with our relations with Afghanistan and the other countries beyond the north-western frontiers of India, and with the progress of Russia in Central Asia than Sir Bartle Frere. Not long before he met Lord Lytton he had visited the Punjab and Peshawur, and he had come away with a strong conviction that our relations with Sher Ali were in the highest degree unsatisfactory. Personal observation and communication with the most experienced officers of the Indian Government had entirely confirmed the conclusions which (as I have shown) he had placed on record in the previous year. He was specially impressed with the fact that even the officers through whom all diplomatic correspondence with the Amir was carried on were completely ignorant of his feelings and wishes and intentions, and had no means of obtaining information on which reliance could be placed. We were following, Sir Bartle Frere said, 'a blind man's buff system,' and, while he admitted that it was impossible to speak with any certainty, he impressed upon Lord Lytton his own belief that the Amir was in his heart bitterly hostile, that it was a matter of urgent necessity that steps should be taken to establish a better understanding, and, if that should prove

impracticable, that we should at least satisfy ourselves that we understood the facts with which we had to deal.

While he was at Lahore Sir Bartle Frere had described, in a letter to Lord Salisbury, the measures which he thought should be adopted. This letter had not reached England before Lord Lytton's departure, and when Lord Lytton saw it he was greatly struck with the virtually complete identity of the conclusions of Sir Bartle Frere with those which he had himself independently formed, and which had been adopted in the instructions which he was taking with him to India. 'There is,' he wrote, 'something positively startling in the almost exact coincidence of Sir Bartle Frere's opinions with those which, before leaving England, I put on paper confidentially for examination by Lord Salisbury and Mr. Disraeli, who entirely concurred with them.'

Sir Bartle Frere to Lord Salisbury

'The objects,' Sir Bartle Frere wrote, 'which Her Majesty's Government have in view are not to quarrel with the Amir of Kabul, but to be on the best possible terms with him, using the Afghans as a buffer to avoid immediate contact between our frontier and that of Russia as long as possible, and to prevent throwing on to the Russian side in Central Asiatic politics such near neighbours of our own. . . . I would intimate to the Amir that the Viceroy's agent was charged with formal credentials, after delivering which he would communicate the Viceroy's views on several important matters, and I would invite the Amir to name any time and place for giving an audience to the Envoy which would be agreeable to him. If he responded cordially I would not mind some delay in arranging the meeting. I would not hurry or show much anxiety about it, but

Sir Bartle Frere on Afghanistan

would consult the Amir's convenience and make allowance for his many difficulties with his own people and fanatical advisers, as well as with foreign influence, which will certainly be exerted to prevent any greater intimacy in his relations with us. If, on the other hand, the Amir showed obvious signs of disinclination to improve his relations, I would take it as clear proof that hostile influences had worked more effectually than we now suppose, that it was useless to attempt to coax or cajole him into a better frame of mind, that we must look for alliance and influence elsewhere than at Kabul, and must seek them in Khelat, at Kandahar, at Herat, and in Persia, and I would lose no time in looking out for them. . . . It is clear from the records that, up to a very late period, the anxiety of the late Amir and his son to be on better terms, and more closely allied to us and our fortunes in India against all comers from the north and west, was very marked. It is, however, unfortunately equally true that there has of late been a marked change in the disposition of the reigning Amir in this respect. What is the extent and what the cause of the change is not clear. Whether the Amir has become convinced that he has more to hope for or fear from the Russians than from us; whether he believes we are in secret league with the Russians to divide his kingdom, a common belief in the bazaars of India since the marriage of the Duke of Edinburgh; whether he is angry at our continued refusal to pledge ourselves to support his chosen heir; whether he is sulky at the smallness or alarmed at the magnitude of our late gifts, or really fears the fanaticism of his own subjects; all these are guesses with more or less to support them, but they are only guesses on a point regarding which

Sir Bartle Frere on Afghanistan

certainty is attainable and of the highest importance. The Envoy who is usually sent by the Amir to communicate with the Commissioner at Peshawur made use of a significant proverb which indicated his view of the cause. It was to the effect that "the cat and dog only cease spitting and snarling when they hear the wolf at the door." But as both know that the wolf is there this does not account for the cat still refusing to be friends with the dog, unless she thinks herself likely to be safer as the ally of the wolf. But before seeking from the Amir any direct explanation of his changed attitude towards us, I would instruct the Envoy to lay before the Amir a perfectly frank and full explanation of the English view of the present situation. It is worse than useless to tell him, as we have so often told him before, that the Russians are our good friends and have no designs beyond the protection of their own frontier and the extension of civilisation and commerce; that we are not in the least disturbed by their advances and are prepared to co-operate with them in promoting an era of peace and goodwill. The Amir knows that all this is humbug, and that we know it to be so; that the Russians are our friends as long as we leave them to pursue their schemes of conquest unchallenged and no longer; that they are essentially a conquering and aggressive nation, and will conquer in our direction unless they are convinced that we shall actively oppose them; that we and our Indian subjects are grievously disturbed by their advances, that we wish them no nearer but have hitherto been afraid to say so openly, or in any manner that would pledge us to observe them openly.'

There is one paragraph in this paper which calls for comment. 'If,' it says, 'the Amir showed signs

of disinclination to improve his relations, I would take it as clear proof that hostile influences had worked more effectually than we now suppose; that it was useless to attempt to coax or cajole him into a better frame of mind; that we must look for alliance and *influence elsewhere than at Kabul, and must seek them in Khelat, at Kandahar, at Herat, and in Persia, and I would lose no time in looking out for them.*'

The biographer of this eminent Indian statesman has taken upon himself to say that, 'had Frere gone to India as Viceroy in 1876' he would in all human probability have converted Sher Ali to the English alliance, and thus prevented war. It is, on the contrary, clear from the words quoted above, that had Sir Bartle Frere been able to carry out these views in 1876, he would 'in all human probability' have brought about the war of 1878 much earlier. To have taken steps leading towards the disintegration of Afghanistan, by seeking alliances in those parts of the Amir's kingdom known to be most disaffected, and with neighbouring States whose power might be turned against him, before the Russians had made the false move of sending a mission to Kabul, and while they still seemed to be on the eve of war with England, could hardly have failed to throw the Amir into their arms. And they might then have assisted him more effectively than afterwards, when, having accomplished his alienation from the British Government, they left him in the lurch.

Arrival at Bombay

On April 7 the *Orontes* reached Bombay. 'The most picturesque town I have ever seen, especially as regards its population,' Lord Lytton wrote. He proceeded in easy stages towards Calcutta. At Allahabad he had an interview with Sir John Strachey, then Lieutenant-Governor of the North-

West Provinces. Their understanding and mutual appreciation of each other dates from that interview, when Lord Lytton found that they agreed upon every financial question, and subsequently he was able to persuade Sir John Strachey to consent to give up his Governorship and accept the post of Financial Minister on the Indian Council at the retirement of the then Minister, Sir William Muir.

Lady Lytton and her children left the Viceroy at Allahabad and went straight to Simla on account of the heat.

Lord Lytton reached Calcutta on April 12, and was there received at Government House by Lord Northbrook. The out-going Viceroy led his successor into the Council Chamber where the Members of Council assembled. The officiating Home Secretary read the Royal Warrant of appointment and Lord Lytton then made a short speech.

'It was not without considerable hesitation,' he writes to Lord Salisbury, 'that I decided at the last moment on breaking the customary rule of silence on such occasions by at once addressing to the Council in presence of the public a short speech.

'From day to day and hour to hour I found as I approached Calcutta that the spirit of anticipative antagonism to the new Viceroy was so strong on the part of the Council here that any appearance of scolding or lecturing them at starting would have been fatal to our future relations. The choice, therefore, lay between saying nothing, or saying something studiously sedative to the quills of these fretful porcupines; and on reaching Allahabad I had fully made up my mind to say nothing. My intention was changed by Strachey.'

Of the effect made on the audience by the speech

Colonel Colley wrote to Lady Lytton. 'I confess I had hoped he would not speak, for it is one of the occasions when it is so difficult to avoid platitudes on one side or saying too much on the other, and I have hardly ever before heard that kind of address without wishing half of it unsaid. But now I am *very* glad he did speak and that I was there to hear him, and only wish you had been too. I had not realised either the power or the modulation of his voice before, nor, though I was prepared for beautiful language, was I quite prepared for such perfect and easy command. But it was the simple earnestness which carried home more than anything else, and there was a sort of holding of the breath in the room at some parts.

'I cannot but think that that speech will help him greatly in his start; that the general impression was much the same as mine I gather from the remarks I heard around me. A stranger standing near me I heard say: "That was a treat indeed worth coming to hear."'

The intercourse between Lord Lytton and Lord Northbrook was of the friendliest character.

To Lady Lytton, April 15, 1876

'Lord Northbrook has been to me most kind, frank, and friendly,' writes Lord Lytton, 'and we parted from each other not altogether without emotion.'

The new Viceroy was now left to meet his Council alone. He was not well, the heat affected him, and he suffered from constant headache and nausea. He confided to his wife that he felt as if he were living under the weight of an increasing nightmare, and oppressed by a sense of forlornness, isolation, and discouragement.

Nothing, however, of this mood appeared in his relations with those who now surrounded him.

The improvement of our relations with Afghanistan was the first matter of importance to which Lord Lytton directed his attention after his arrival in Calcutta. He had anticipated much difficulty in obtaining the support of his Council to the measures which in the first instance he desired to take, but his fears proved to be unfounded. For the reasons that have already been explained, he did not produce the instructions of Her Majesty's Government, and he had no difficulty in obtaining the assent of the Council to the opinion that the appointment of a new Viceroy and the proposed assumption by the Queen of an imperial title which would proclaim unmistakably to the Eastern world the fact of her supremacy over the whole of India, afforded a favourable occasion for endeavouring to re-open friendly communications with the Amir of Kabul. The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Frederick Haines, had come to Calcutta for the express purpose of giving Lord Lytton his support. He was in complete accord, in regard to this Afghan question, with his predecessor, that *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, Lord Napier of Magdala, who, when he was leaving India, had written to Lord Lytton expressing in strong terms his conviction that our position towards Afghanistan was 'unsafe and humiliating,' and that measures ought no longer to be delayed for improving it.

The instructions of the Home Government had left to Lord Lytton complete discretion in regard to the manner in which communications should be opened with Sher Ali. The suggestion that a mission to the Amir might perhaps be combined with one to the Khan of Khelat, and proceed to Kabul by way of Quettah and Kandahar, could not be acted upon, because an officer had been sent by the Government

of Lord Northbrook on a special mission to the Khan a few days before the arrival of Lord Lytton in India.[1] The adoption of the further suggestion that it would be desirable, in the first instance, to communicate with the Amir through the Commissioner of Peshawur seemed, however, open to no objection. There could be no difference of opinion in regard to the importance of improving our relations with Sher Ali, and the members of Council gave their unanimous consent to Lord Lytton's proposal that while no letter should be sent by the Viceroy himself, a less formal communication should be made to the Amir by the Commissioner, telling him that it was proposed to send either to Kabul or to any other place which he might prefer a special mission to announce to him the recent accession of the Viceroy to office, and the assumption by the Queen of the title of Empress of India, and assuring him of the friendly disposition of the British Government. The risk would thus be avoided of any embarrassing refusal on the part of Sher Ali to receive the mission, a contingency which could not be ignored while his attitude towards us was so little satisfactory.

The mission thus proposed differed to some extent in its character from that contemplated in the instructions of the Secretary of State, and was more restricted in its immediate aim. It was not only ostensibly but essentially 'one of compliment and courtesy.' The primary object was the establishment of more friendly relations and the removal of the feelings of anger and distrust which the Amir

[1] It was nevertheless asserted by Lord Lytton's opponents in England that the negotiations with the Khan of Khelat and the signing of the Treaty at Jacobabad were begun and carried out by him for the express purpose of irritating the Amir of Kabul, and forcing him into an attitude of open hostility.

appeared to entertain. The mission might at least, it was hoped, if nothing else were gained, prepare the way for future negotiations, and be the first step towards a settlement of existing difficulties. Lord Lytton did not wish that any question likely to be unpleasant to the Amir should be raised at all. It was only in the event of the Amir receiving the Envoy with cordiality, and showing an apparently sincere desire to improve his relations with us, that any subject of political importance need be discussed. It was possible that in the course of amicable communications the real wishes of the Amir might be ascertained, but the Envoy would volunteer no proposals on behalf of our Government.

A few days after this decision had been arrived at, Lord Lytton left Calcutta for Northern India, and on April 24 he met the Commissioner of Peshawur, Sir Richard Pollock, at Umballa, and gave to him the draft of the letter which was to be sent to the Amir. A Mohammedan officer, Ressaldar-Major Khanan Khan, Aide-de-camp to the Viceroy, was chosen to carry the Commissioner's letter to Kabul. The letter was to the effect that the Commissioner desired to acquaint the Amir that Lord Lytton had assumed the Viceroyalty of India, that 'His Excellency had inquired very cordially after the Amir's health and welfare and that of His Highness Abdullah Jan,' and that it was the Viceroy's intention, as soon as the necessary arrangements could be made, to depute Sir Lewis Pelly to him as special Envoy. 'Sir Lewis Pelly (the letter said) will be accompanied by Dr. Bellew and Major St. John, for the purpose of delivering to your Highness in person at Khureeta, a letter informing your Highness of His Excellency's accession to office, and formally announcing to your

First letter to the Amir

Highness the addition which Her Majesty the Queen has been pleased to make to her sovereign titles in respect to her Empire in India. I feel sure that your Highness will fully reciprocate the friendly feelings by which the Viceroy's intention is prompted, and I beg the favour of an intimation of the place at which it would be most convenient to your Highness to receive His Excellency's Envoy. Sir Lewis Pelly, who is honoured by the new Viceroy with His Excellency's fullest confidence, will be able to discuss with your Highness matters of common interest to the two Governments.'

Amir receives letter, May 17

Some delay occurred in consequence of the necessity of obtaining from Kabul a safe-conduct for the Ressaldar, and it was not until May 17 that he was able to deliver the Commissioner's letter to the Amir. It was impressed upon him that he had no political function of any kind, and that he had been selected simply out of compliment to the Amir, as the bearer of the letter. He was to make it known, however, that the proposed mission would be of the most friendly character, and that the probable result would be one highly favourable to the Amir's interests.

Before the Commissioner's letter reached its destination some interesting information regarding the attitude of the Amir was received through a pensioner of the British Government who, in the time of Dost Mohammed, had taken a prominent part in Afghan politics. It strengthened the opinion which Lord Lytton had formed regarding the feelings of Sher Ali towards our Government, and rendered him more doubtful than before of obtaining any satisfactory reply to the overtures that were being made. This information was contained in a letter giving an

account, which there was every reason to believe trustworthy, of a durbar held by the Amir at Kabul, at which all the principal Sirdars and officers of the Court and the heads of the principal tribes were present. A report had been received that an English army was marching through the Bolan Pass with the intention of occupying Kandahar. This the Amir declared to be perfectly groundless; he said that Mr. Disraeli, who was then in favour in England and who had appointed Lord Lytton, was the same Minister who had previously appointed his true friend Lord Mayo, that the new Viceroy had brought with him Lord Mayo's Secretary, and would undoubtedly be his friend also. He then ordered the Court to be cleared; his confidential officers were alone allowed to remain, and the Amir told them that he wished to learn their opinions. He said that he believed that the English Government was seriously disturbed by the approach of the Russians towards Merv, and that they wished to send an Envoy to Kabul or to obtain his consent to the establishment of a permanent mission at Herat. If this were to happen he was afraid that he would be involved in difficulties, and that the Russian Governor-General at Samarkand would declare that he had taken measures hostile to the interests of Russia. The Sirdars replied: 'We are in a dilemma which requires deep deliberation to remove. The Amir should summon or write to the Governor of Balkh, who is in constant communication with the Russians and well versed in their affairs, for advice what to do.' A letter was written to the Governor accordingly. Various reports were then mentioned. One of them from Bokhara was to the effect that it was the common talk in the Russian camps at Samarkand

and other places in Turkestan that the daughter of the Emperor of Russia, who was married to an English Prince, had been offended, and had gone to her father to complain, and that this had caused a rupture between the two Powers. After a long silence the Amir said that an English escort had passed with a *kafila* unmolested through the Bolan Pass, and that a complaint that the Khyber was not kept similarly safe for trade would next be made. He was bewildered, he said, what to do. To this the Prime Minister, Syud Noor Mahomed Shah, replied that so long as intercourse with the English was prevented, the interests of the Amir and of the Afghans would flourish and the friendship of the Amir would be eagerly sought by the Russians on the side of the Oxus and by the English on the side of India. 'The lessons,' he said, 'which had been learned by his frequent missions to the English Government in India would never efface this impression from his heart.'

There can be no question that this declaration summed up very accurately the views of the Afghan Minister. He, it will be remembered, had been the Envoy whose fruitless mission to Lord Northbrook in 1873 is well known. He had returned to Kabul with feelings anything but friendly to our Government, and with the conviction that more was to be feared from Russia than from ourselves. He was a man of no little ability, his influence was great, and his constant hostility to the English produced, without any doubt, a most serious impression on the suspicious mind of the Amir.

May 22, 1876
The Amir's reply

On May 22 the Amir gave to the Ressaldar his answer to the Commissioner's letter, and it reached Peshawur on June 1. It was written in the usual

style of oriental verbosity, and was full of the ordinary commonplaces of politeness, but in substance it was vague and ambiguous and hardly courteous. It was virtually a refusal to receive the proposed mission. It was to the effect that all questions affecting the two States had been sufficiently discussed with the Amir's agent in 1873, and in the correspondence between the Viceroy and Amir that followed the Simla conferences, and that further discussion was unnecessary. If, however, there were any fresh subjects which the British Government wished to bring forward, the Amir preferred to make himself acquainted with them by sending to the Viceroy a confidential agent of his own.[1]

On the same day on which the Amir's letter was despatched, the British agent at Kabul sent to the

[1] It is not easy to give either a translation or a summary of the obscure verbiage of the Amir's Persian letter. The following is the official literal version of the only portions of it which have any importance :

'In the particular of the coming of the Sahibs for the purpose of certain matters of the two Governments is this, that the Agent of his friend formally personally held political parleys at the station of Simla ; 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, dated Thursday, the 21st of the month of Ramzan the Sacred, in the year 1290 of the Flight of the Prophet, and dated Friday, the 22nd of the month of Safar the Victorious, in the year 1291 of the Flight of the Prophet, and need not be repeated now. Please God the Most High, the friendship and the union of the God-given state of Afghanistan in relation to the state of lofty authority, the Majestic Government of England will remain strong and firm as usual. At this time, if there be any new parleys for the purpose of freshening and benefitting the God-given state of Afghanistan entertained in the thoughts, then let it be hinted, so that a confidential Agent of this friend, arriving in that place and being presented with the things concealed in the generous heart of the English Government, should reveal to the suppliant at the Divine Throne, in order that the matters weighed by a minute and exact investigation may be committed to the pen of affectionate writing.'—*Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

Commissioner of Peshawur an interesting account of the consultations that had taken place between the Amir and his advisers and of his reason for refusing to receive the mission. This account was especially valuable, because it was undoubtedly written with the knowledge and approval of the Amir. Three reasons were given. The first was that the Amir could not guarantee the safety of the British officers of the mission. The second reason was that if the British Envoy 'should put forth any such weighty matter of State that its entertainment by His Highness, in view of the demands of the time, should prove difficult, and he should verbally reject it, there would occur a breach of the friendship of the two Governments. And then, for the sake of removing that breach, it will be necessary for both Governments to endure troublés. It was by reason of these very considerations, at the time of making the first treaty between the English Government and the State of Kabul, that His Highness the late Amir objected to the coming of an English Envoy of European race. Moreover, from that time to this, whenever occasions have presented themselves for the coming of Sahibs, the Kabul Government has always objected to them from farsightedness. Now, too, the coming of Sahibs, in view of the state of affairs, is not desirable.'

The third reason for refusing the mission was the most significant of all, and it was undoubtedly that which had the greatest influence on the decision of the Amir. It is here quoted *in extenso* from the official translation of the agent's report:

'To us especially the point of chief regard is this —that if simply, for the sake of seeking the good-will of the English Government, we consent to the

coming of a European agent, and for his safety, let us suppose, perfect arrangements are made, then this great difficulty arises, that the coming and going of the Sahibs cannot be concealed anyhow from the Russian Government, which on my northern border is conterminous with the frontier of the English Government. The people of the Russian Government are extremely fearless. If any man of theirs, by way of Envoy, or in the name of speaking about some other matter of State, should suddenly enter the territory of Afghanistan, then it would be impossible by any means to stop him. In other words, their way too would be opened; and in the opening of that road there is good neither to the State of Kabul nor to the English Government. Consequently in this matter it is better that the coming and going of the Sahibs should, according to the former custom, remain closed; and first that some confidential agent of ours going to the English Government, and there becoming acquainted with the State requirements, should inform us of what is in the mind of the English Government; and the Kabul Government, considering the subject in its own place, give answer to the English Government regarding those objects, whether written or verbal. And if our man, in conversation there, agree to or refuse any point, then by all pretexts the Amir can arrange for its settlement. But if in his presence it devolves on His Highness to summarily accept or reject some State demand, this becomes a very hard matter, and its ultimate issue will not turn out well.'

**Viceroy receives communications from Kabul June 5**

These communications from Kabul reached the Viceroy on June 5. They appeared to him entirely to confirm the opinions which he and Her Majesty's Government had formed, and to show very plainly

the convictions and intentions of Sher Ali. He summed up his conclusions as follows in a private letter to Lord Salisbury: 'First, the Amir is satisfied that there is nothing more to be got out of us; second, that there is not much to be feared from us. He is also under an impression that if we are not positively pledged to passivity by some understanding with Russia, we are at least mortally afraid of coming into collision with her by more actively supporting him. He consequently looks upon his northern neighbours as the more formidable of the two. He argues that if we are obliged to propitiate Russia, *a fortiori* he must do so, and that his only safe policy for the present is to treat us both as Penelope treated the suitors. But, as he believes us to be the most scrupulous and least offensive of his two awkward customers, it is England that he is least afraid of offending. The Government of a great empire which, in a matter closely concerning its own interests, suffers itself to be with impunity addressed by a weak barbarian chief who is under accumulated obligations to its protection and forbearance in terms of contemptuous disregard, cannot be surprised if its self-respect and powers of self-assertion are under-rated by such a correspondent. The practical difficulty of the present situation is that I have no means of verbal communication with the Amir. The native agent is not to be trusted. Many things which it is absolutely necessary to make Sher Ali understand and duly appreciate, and which could be very effectively said to His Highness by an intelligent agent, one hesitates to put into writing when it is probable that the letter will be transmitted to Russian headquarters.'

To Lord Salisbury

When the Amir's letter was received, it was

necessary to decide whether his answer should be taken as final. It was Lord Lytton's conviction that the reasons given by Sher Ali for refusing to receive the proposed mission could neither be accepted by the British Government with dignity nor be passed over in silence. He thought that an opportunity should be afforded to the Amir of reconsidering his decision, and that this course was not only desirable in our own interests, but was the fairest towards the Amir himself. But he felt that a second communication, renewing an offer already rejected, would place our Government in a false position if it failed to show to the Amir the serious responsibility that he would incur by adopting a line of conduct which would have the appearance of deliberate discourtesy, or which omitted to show to him generally but distinctly the views which we held regarding his position and our own. The subject was discussed in the Council, to which Lord Salisbury's instructions of February 28 were now communicated. The majority agreed with the opinion of the Viceroy, and the Commissioner of Peshawur was directed to write to the Amir in the following terms:

After acknowledging the receipt of the Amir's letter, and once more explaining that in the suggested mission the Viceroy was actuated only by friendship towards the Amir, the letter went on: 'The reluctance evinced by your Highness to the reception of this friendly mission is much to be regretted.

July 8, 1876
Second letter to the Amir

'But by a letter which I have received from the British agent at your Highness' Court, I am induced to believe that your Highness' advisers, in counselling you not to receive the Viceroy's Envoy, may have been influenced by a misconception of the objects of His Excellency, or may not have fully considered the

light in which such a refusal might be regarded by the British Government. I have therefore, in accordance with the Viceroy's instructions, explained at length to the British agent the views of His Excellency on the relations between the two Governments, and on the causes to which he attributes the reluctance of your Highness to receive the mission. These views he has been instructed to communicate to your Highness.

'Your Highness has indeed suggested that it would answer all purposes were you to depute a confidential agent to learn from the Viceroy the views of the British Government. My friend, the Viceroy cannot receive an agent from your Highness when you have declined to receive His Excellency's trusted friend and Envoy. The British agent at the Court of your Highness will explain to you the reasons which make it impossible for the Viceroy to accept such a proposal.

'It is the Viceroy's sincere desire not merely to maintain, but also materially to strengthen, the bonds of friendship and confidence between the British Government and the Government of Afghanistan, so that the interest of your Highness, as the sovereign of a friendly and independent frontier State, may be effectually guaranteed against all cause for future anxiety. But the support of the British Government cannot be effectual unless it is based on reciprocal confidence and a clear recognition of the means requisite for the protection of mutual interests.

'I am to repeat that in proposing to send a friendly mission to your Highness, the Viceroy has been actuated by a cordial desire, which it rests with your Highness to reciprocate, for the continuance on closer terms than heretofore of amicable relations between

the two Governments, in view of common interests more particularly affecting Afghanistan and the personal welfare of your Highness and your dynasty. It will for this reason cause the Viceroy sincere regret if your Highness, by hastily rejecting the hand of friendship now frankly held out to you, should render nugatory the friendly intentions of His Excellency, and oblige him to regard Afghanistan as a State which has voluntarily isolated itself from the alliance and support of the British Government.'

The letter to the Amir was despatched on July 8, and the British agent at Kabul was at the same time instructed to give personally to the Amir additional explanations and assurances. He was to point out, with reference to the fears that had been expressed regarding the safety of the proposed mission, that it had never been thought essential that the Envoy should go to Kabul itself, and that it had been distinctly stated that the Viceroy was prepared to send his Envoy to any place which the Amir himself might prefer; that the apprehension that demands injurious to the Amir might be made upon him was quite groundless, and that so long as the Amir showed himself to be a loyal friend and ally, the Viceroy would always regard the interests of Afghanistan as identical with those of the British Government. With regard to the objections made in the Kabul Durbar, that if British missions were received by the Amir he would be obliged to receive Russian missions also, the agent was to remind him that the Government of the Czar had given to the British Government assurances that it would not interfere, directly or indirectly, in the affairs of Afghanistan, that consequently the reception of a British Envoy could lead to no such consequences as those that had been feared, for in declining to

receive a Russian Envoy the Amir would only be acting in conformity with the policy which had already been solemnly agreed upon. 'If,' the Amir was told, 'His Highness should on further reflection recognise the expediency of learning the true nature of His Excellency's views and dispositions in regard to matters which materially concern the interests of His Highness, Sir Lewis Pelly will still be authorised to wait upon the Amir, at such place as he may appoint, and should the interviews consequent on this meeting lead to a more cordial and reliable understanding between the two Governments, the Viceroy will be happy to meet the Amir in person at Peshawur in November next, if His Highness should so desire.'

Three members of the Council, Sir William Muir, Sir Henry Norman, and Sir Arthur Hobhouse, dissented from the views of Lord Lytton and the majority of their colleagues. They were of opinion that Sher Ali was acting within his right in refusing to receive an English mission, that the reasons assigned by him were substantial, and that the proposed letter was almost equivalent to a threat of war. They held that although stress had been laid on the temporary and complimentary character of the mission, its real object was, as the Amir well knew, to enforce the reception of permanent English agents, that we were not dealing fairly with the Amir if we omitted to state distinctly the object at which we were aiming, that if the temporary mission were accepted and the permanent mission refused our position would be embarrassing, and that we ought to resolve beforehand whether in such a case we should accept the refusal or resort to force. It was better, they thought, to wait until the Amir was in

want of our assistance to help him out of difficulties, when we could make terms with him.

Lord Lytton's reasons for thinking it essential that this further communication should be made to the Amir were recorded by him in an official note from which the following extract may be made:

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'I am anxious to take this opportunity, the earliest in my power, of noticing the arguments urged against the course which, after anxious reflection, I still deem it my duty to pursue, in the conduct of our relations with the Amir of Kabul. I understand the policy of those of my colleagues who are unable to adopt my own point of view to have been correctly described, by those whose description of it is most authoritative, as "a waiting policy." But a policy of waiting is, by the essential nature of it, a policy destined and intended to merge, at some period in the course of events, into a policy of action, or at least of attainment; and, for this reason, at every point in the prosecution of such a policy, as time goes on without bringing us any nearer to the attainment of its avowed object, it behoves us to consider whether the inadequate result of our waiting be due to our not having yet waited long enough, or to our having already waited too long.

'It is obvious that a policy of waiting for ever on the course of events, without the slightest attempt to control it, would be no policy at all; and I am persuaded that such a simulacrum of a policy has no advocate in this Council. The only practical question, therefore, for present consideration is, whether we have waited long enough, or too long.

'The policy of passive expectation has been tried with great patience for many years past; and I cannot find that it has been productive of a single

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result that is not eminently unsatisfactory. Not in all the official correspondence to which it has given rise is there one solitary expression of opinion that this policy has improved the character of our intercourse with the Afghan Government, or increased our control over its conduct. Any such opinion is, indeed, forbidden by indisputable facts. Whilst the avenging current of uncontrolled events has been rapidly deepening the danger and strengthening the pressure from without, which augment the defensive importance to us of a strong hold upon Afghanistan, our relations with that country have steadily deteriorated; until at last the Amir, whose disposition towards the British Government was in 1869 unmistakably cordial, now rejects our gifts and advice, with an apparently profound indifference to the periodical expressions of our meekly passive regret.

'Judging the tree by its fruits, therefore, I can come to no other conclusion than that the waiting policy has failed after a singularly fair trial of it. Is there any valid ground for hoping that, by a prolonged and more assiduous cultivation of it, this policy will now, within any calculable period of time or at any time at all, be suddenly productive of results essentially different from those it has already produced? I think not. The anticipation has, indeed, been expressed with some confidence by two or three of my colleagues that, if we only still go on waiting long enough, the Amir will very soon be spontaneously sorry for his conduct towards us and eagerly solicitous of our favours, that events, if left entirely to themselves, will before long bring him to our feet, or drive him into our arms. Could I share this anticipation, I should recognise in it a conclusive argument for maintaining the policy of passive

expectation, undeterred by the experience of the past. I have, therefore, examined with care the only grounds on which such an hypothesis can rest.

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'Virtually they resolve themselves into a single assumption, viz. the early probability of one or other of two events, pressure on the Amir by Russia from without or by his own subjects from within. It is certainly probable that Sher Ali would spontaneously sue for our assistance, and accept it on our own terms, if he were attacked by Russia. But that is precisely the contingency which it is our interest to prevent. The alliance of the Amir will have lost much of the value we may even still accord to it when, instead of enabling us to make better provision for the defence of our territory, it obliges us to rush, unprepared, to the rescue of his. Russian statesmen, however, are, to say the least, as wary and sagacious as we. I foresee no probability of such a mistake on their part; and the most dangerous of all policies is that which reckons exclusively for its success upon the faults or blunders of others. Our present object, as I understand it, must be, not war for the defence of our frontier, but the security of our frontier for the prevention of war. If Russia ever attacks Afghanistan, it will be with the intention of attacking the British Empire in India, and in the belief that the British Empire cannot efficiently defend itself. If we passively await such an event, it is not so much Sher Ali who will then help us, as we who shall have to help him, under conditions which his previous disregard of our advice and our own neglect of timely precautions may have rendered seriously disadvantageous.

'But, if Russia does not attack Afghanistan, she can do nothing else which will have the effect of

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driving the Amir, "before long," into our arms. Every successful attempt, secretly made by her, to establish a pacific *political* influence at Kabul, or a moral ascendency over the mind of the Amir, must surely have the effect, not of driving him into our arms, but of still further detaching him from us. And if, in the meanwhile, we are to make no effort to avert such a result; if the Amir is to remain perfectly independent of our influence, and absolutely unpledged to our Government, so that, when the critical moment arrives, he may be conveniently free to choose between the alliance of England and the alliance of Russia, we must not take it for granted that he will then throw himself into our arms rather than into those of our great rival. To me the possibilities seem all the other way; for, if ever such a moment does arrive (and who can even feel sure that it is far distant?), the most we can *then* offer the Amir will be less than the least that Russia can offer him—viz. a share in her anticipated conquest of the rich plains of British India.

'The importance of being beforehand with Russia by establishing a dominant British influence at Kabul was fully appreciated by Lord Palmerston as early as 1847. In a letter then written to Lord Russell, he observed that "a Russian force in occupation of Afghanistan might not be able to march to Calcutta, but it might convert Afghanistan into the advanced post of Russia, instead of that advanced post being in Persia; and, whatever Hardinge may say of the security of the rest of our frontier, you would find in such case a very restless spirit displayed by the Burmese, by the Nepaulese, and by all the unincorporated States scattered about the surface of our Indian possessions. These things

would lead to great expense, would require great efforts, and might create considerable damage. The best method of preventing these embarrassments seems to be to take up such a position, not *in posse*, but *in esse*, as would make it plain to everybody that we could not be taken by surprise."

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'I am of opinion that there is no sufficient reason to anticipate from the "waiting policy" in the future any better results than those whereby it must be condemned if judged by the past.

'Nevertheless, if this great empire, for the safety of which so large a share of personal responsibility has been laid upon me, had now no neighbour more formidable than the Amir of Kabul, I think that, considering the weakness of such a neighbour, the turbulent character of his subjects, the geographical configuration of his country, and the wretched recollection of former ill advised and ill executed interference in the affairs of Afghanistan, it might possibly be prudent to treat with passive indifference the churlishness of Sher Ali; and accept, without remonstrance, all that is unsatisfactory in our relations with him, so long as he abstained from acts of aggression, to which he is not likely to resort and which we could easily punish. In other words, I think that much might, perhaps, be urged with effect in favour of the "waiting policy," if the situation we have now to deal with were not materially different from the situation to which that policy was first applied.

'But, *Rusticus exspectat dum defluit amnis.* While we wait upon the bank, the stream is bearing from us what we wish to keep, and to us what we wish to avoid. The circumstances of 1876 are essentially different from those of 1869. The neighbour we

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have now to fear is not Afghanistan but Russia. And the danger with which we are most immediately menaced by Russia is not the loss of territory, but the loss of that political influence or prestige which is the most pacific safeguard of territory. Sher Ali may wish to remain stationary; but the Russian power in Central Asia cannot remain stationary. Its position is too weak. Small bodies gravitate to great ones. If Afghanistan does not gravitate towards the British, it must gravitate towards the Russian Empire. And between bodies of equivalent gravity the attractive force of the one that is in movement will always exceed that of the one which is motionless.

'In 1853 Lord Palmerston, writing to Lord Clarendon, recorded an opinion which (if I may venture to speak of myself in connection with so eminent a statesman) completely expresses the conviction I have formed from nearly twenty years' practical study of Russian diplomacy in Europe. "The policy and practice of the Russian Government," he says, "have always been to push forward its encroachments as fast, and as far, as the apathy, or want of firmness, of other Governments would allow it to go, but always to stop and retire when it was met with decided resistance, and then to wait for the next favourable opportunity to make another spring on its intended victim. In furtherance of this policy, the Russian Government has always had two strings to its bow—moderate language and disinterested professions at Petersburg and London; active aggression by its agents on the scene of operations. If the aggressions succeed locally, the Petersburg Government adopts them as a *fait accompli* which it did not intend, but cannot, in honour, recede from. If the local agents fail, they are

disavowed and recalled, and the language previously held is appealed to as a proof that the agents have overstepped their instructions. This was exemplified in the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi, and in the exploits of Simonivitch and Vikovitch in Persia. Orloff succeeded in extorting the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi from the Turks, and it was represented as a sudden thought suggested by the circumstances of the time and place, and not the result of any previous instructions; but, having been done, it could not be undone. On the other hand, Simonivitch and Vikovitch failed in getting possession of Herat in consequence of our vigorous measures of resistance; and as they failed, and *when* they had failed, they were disavowed and recalled and the language previously held at Petersburg was appealed to as a proof of the sincerity of the disavowal, although no human being with two ideas in his head could for a moment doubt that they had acted under specific instructions."

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'Our own position, as regards Sher Ali, seems, at the present moment, to be this—that, whilst his Highness is in no wise bound to help *us* against Russia, we are under an admitted obligation to help *him* against her; that he is practically free to negotiate with Russia whenever he pleases; and that *we* are practically unable to negotiate with *him*. Such a position is not only undignified; it is, in our present circumstances, positively dangerous. It suggests the following question, to which, during the last few months, my most anxious and constant consideration has been given: Can we now better it, and, if we fail in any attempt to better it, may we not make it worse? It is not a question of letting well alone, but of letting bad alone; and there are, no doubt, situations in politics, as in life, when, for those

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who are the victims of them, it is "better to bear the ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of."

'Now, nobody can recognise more seriously than I do, that there is considerable risk in whatever we do as well as in whatever we do not do; it is a risk bequeathed to us by the inexorable Nemesis of neglected opportunities. Fortune is a fair player, and never checkmates a man, or a nation, without first crying check; but we have greatly increased the difficulty of our game by not moving our pieces when there was still time to cover the King.

'The arguments in favour of letting bad alone, for fear of making bad worse—or, in other words, of meeting the Amir's rejection of our present proposals by reversion to a waiting policy—are all comprised, I think, in the three following propositions:

'1. The position in which we are thus left, as regards our relations with Afghanistan, though not, indeed, all that could be wished, is quite good enough. We have endured it without serious inconvenience for the last five years, and there is no reason why we should not as conveniently endure it for the next five years; since, in fact, we have obtained from Russia the recognition of our exclusive right to hold diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, and that is really all we need.

'2. Whatever may be the intrinsic weakness of this position, the native population of India is still fortunately under the impression that it is a strong one, and that our relations with Afghanistan are thoroughly satisfactory. Any proceeding, therefore, on our part which might disturb this salutary faith by revealing the hollowness of its foundation would prejudicially weaken the confidence of our native

subjects in the plenitude of our power and the wisdom of our policy.

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'3. Be the situation good or bad, any attempt to improve or escape from it must infallibly land us in a worse position; for practically there is no alternative between the passive toleration of the Amir's present attitude towards us, and a declaration of hostilities against Afghanistan. So that any step to right or left out of the false position in which we now find ourselves must be deprecated as a first step towards war. Such a step would be specially unwise at the present moment; because the mind of our Mohammedan population is, in all probability, much excited just now by the news which daily reaches us from Constantinople, and their sympathies would be against us in any act of aggression on a Mohammedan State.

'Now all these propositions appear to me to rest on fallacious premisses. As regards the first, it is unhappily not to be denied that the situation we have accepted during the last five years has been steadily deteriorating; and I cannot contemplate without alarm its continued deterioration during the next five years. Looking at what has recently happened in Central Asia, and at what is now happening in Europe, I am persuaded that, if our influence declines, that of Russia must increase at Kabul.

. . . . . .

'As regards the second of the above-mentioned propositions, I have been at some pains to ascertain the impression made by recent and present events on those native chiefs and princes with whom I have as yet come into personal contact; and I have myself been seriously impressed by the apparent unanimity of their opinion as to the reality of the rivalry between

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England and Russia in the East and the weakness of our political influence in Afghanistan. But even if I could believe that the natives of India are under any illusion as to the true character of our actual position in regard to Afghanistan, I should still consider it unwise to refrain from all attempt to rectify that position for fear of dispelling an illusion which cannot last for ever.

'With regard to the third proposition, I neither desire a war with Afghanistan nor contemplate any step likely to provoke it. But everyone who has had the slightest experience in the management of international relations must be aware that there are a thousand ways of influencing the conduct of your neighbours without going to war with them; and of augmenting, or enforcing, the external power of a State without recourse to arms. Nor is reckless action the only alternative to reckless inactivity.

'I entirely share the opinion that a frank and straightforward policy is generally the best on all occasions. But the above-mentioned remarks appear to have been suggested by a misapprehension of fact. I have always thought, and still think, that a permanent British Envoy at Kabul would be both unnecessary and unwise; for if the Amir can be induced to recognise his true interests, satisfactory intercourse between the two Governments can be better secured by other means. Therefore, the establishment of a permanent British mission at Kabul is not amongst the objects I have in view. But here I must further explain that, in the event of Sher Ali's assent, on further reflection, to the reception of a special Envoy from the Viceroy, it is not, and never was, my intention to instruct or permit the Envoy to make to the Amir a single proposal of

any kind or on any subject, in the name of the Viceroy, or the Government. All I desire and intend is that if the Amir should, *on his part*, make any proposals to the Envoy, the Envoy may be in a position to answer them with perfect frankness and decision, so far as they can be anticipated; explaining clearly to the Amir the terms and conditions on which the British Government is prepared to accede to such and such demands on his part, and the reason why such and such others must be declined.

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'If, therefore, the Amir makes no proposals to our Envoy, the mission will retain to the last its purely complimentary character; and we shall be neither better nor worse off for it, except in so far as it will have served to test the disposition of the Amir, as to which, at present, we can only make guesses, more or less plausible; and possibly to furnish us with some intelligent and intelligible information about the actual state of affairs at Kabul, as to which we are now for all practical purposes in profound ignorance. If, on the other hand, the Amir does make any overtures to our agent, or any demands upon our Government, they will at least be answered whether affirmatively or negatively without ambiguity, and in a manner consistent with the dignity of a great empire. . . .

'As it is, unfortunately, one of our chief difficulties, in any possible negotiation with Sher Ali, is the probability that he may make demands upon us so exorbitant that none of them can be accepted. But if we formally invite him beforehand to make all the demands which we are secretly disposed to accept, it stands to reason that he will take it for granted that our first word is not our last; that he will greatly

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overrate the importance we attach to his alliance, and the sacrifices we must accept to secure it; and that he will raise his pretensions accordingly. . . .

'When I received Sher Ali's letter rejecting the proposed mission, I had to consider whether his rejection of it was tentative or final. Had I come to the conclusion that it must be regarded as final, I should have felt it my duty to lose no time in informing my colleagues of the steps which, in anticipation of such an event, I had considered, and was prepared to take, for the protection of British interests without further reference to those of the Amir. But, bearing in mind the reticence of the letter written by Sir Richard Pollock under my instructions to Sher Ali, and all the circumstances which might have reasonably induced the Amir to believe that he has nothing more to hope and nothing more to fear from us, I came to the conclusion that it was fairer to His Highness, and more advantageous to ourselves, to regard his reply as a tentative one, and to give him the opportunity of reconsidering his decision. The occasion, therefore, for acting on the Amir's rejection of the mission had not, as it seems to me, yet arisen.'

The Amir replies, Sept. 3

The Commissioner's letter was delivered to the Amir on July 17, but it was not until September 3 that any answer was sent to it. Meanwhile the attitude of the Amir was extremely doubtful, and the Diaries of the British agent showed that much excitement had been aroused in Kabul by reports that a religious war against the infidels was to be proclaimed. The Mulla, Mushk-i-Alam of Ghuzni, who was held in special honour, was consulted, and all the correspondence of the Amir with the British and Russian Governments was placed before him. He was

received at a special durbar, at which Sher Ali described to him the situation in which he was placed between the two great Powers. 'It is desirable,' the Amir said, 'that you should, in compliance with my wishes, summon all the Mullas and learned men of all grades from time to time, and direct them to advise and exhort the people occasionally, so that by your exertions the gem of the promotion of the strength of Islam may fall as desired into the palm of success. Though hitherto the friendship existing between the Governments has not been disturbed, it is evident that if a more powerful bird catches a little one in his claws, the small bird does not refrain from using its claws for its release until it is killed. It is a matter for thousands of congratulations that the Mohammedans of Afghanistan have from ancient times stood against the depredations of foreign races. Under these circumstances it is incumbent on me and on you to consider it one of your most important objects to direct the people of Islam to make efforts for their safety and to provide for or guard against the evil day.'

In accordance with the desire of the Amir, the Mulla Mushk-i-Alam summoned the Mullas of Kabul and the neighbourhood, and, after consulting them, pronounced his opinion that the first decision to refuse to receive the British mission had been right and should be maintained.

While the Amir was hesitating regarding the answer to be sent to the letter from the Commissioner of Peshawur, he received with much cordiality a Mohammedan Envoy bearing a letter from the Russian Governor-General. Another Envoy from General Kaufmann had arrived in June, and he still remained at Kabul. A copy of the letter brought by

one of these Envoys was given by the Durbar to the British agent and sent by him to the Government of India, but with this exception nothing transpired regarding the communications between General Kaufmann and the Amir. General Kaufmann's letter was a very long one, giving minute details regarding the late annexation of Khokand. It was sent, General Kaufmann said, in continuation of previous communications, because it was due to the Amir as the friend of Russia that he should be made acquainted with the events that had occurred. Although it professed to be a letter of mere courtesy, it was obviously intended to impress on the mind of Sher Ali the hopelessness of any opposition to the military power of Russia and the danger of provoking it.[1]

These proceedings of General Kaufmann were reported by Lord Lytton's Government to the Secretary of State, and diplomatic correspondence between the British and Russian Governments followed. It led, as usual, to no practical result. The Russian Government declared that they 'had not endeavoured to conclude any arrangement, commercial or political, with the Amir of Kabul, and that the rare relations of their authorities in Central Asia had never borne any other character than one of pure courtesy, in conformity with local usages in the East. While now receiving these assurances the Imperial Government hoped that the British Government would recognise that practically they had never swerved from them, whatever may have been the erroneous interpretations placed by the native Asiatic Governments on the communications of

[1] The letter will be found in Parliamentary Papers No. 1, 1881, Central Asia, pp. 12–14.

General Kaufmann, and whatever false importance may have been attributed to the method of transmission adopted by him.[1] Some months afterwards, the correspondence closed with the following perfectly just and accurate comments of Lord Lytton's Government: 'There can be no doubt that the communications between General Kaufmann and Sher Ali exceed the requirements of mere exchanges of courtesy, and are regarded as something much more than complimentary by the person to whom they are addressed. The messages from General Kaufmann to the Amir have not been despatched, as stated by the General, only "once or twice a year." During the past year they have been incessant. The bearers of them are regarded and treated by the Amir as agents of the Russian Government, and, on one pretext or another, some person recognised by the Afghan Government as a Russian agent is now almost constantly at Kabul. We desire to submit to your Lordship's consideration whether our own conduct would be viewed with indifference by the Cabinet of St. Petersburg, were the Government of India to open similarly friendly relations with the Khans of Khiva and Bokhara, and if, without actually making to them overtures of alliance, we addressed to those princes frequent letters containing assurances of friendship, coupled with explanations of the policy we deem it desirable to pursue towards the States upon our own frontier.'

Proposals of Sir Jung Bahadur

At this time a remarkable proposal was made privately to the Viceroy by Sir Jung Bahadur, the Prime Minister and virtual master of Nepaul. His loyal friendship towards our Government was undoubted; he understood that our relations with

[1] Note by M. de Giers to the British ambassador, March 5, 1877.

the Amir were in a most unsatisfactory position and that the growing influence of Russia in Afghanistan was causing us anxiety, and he fancied that if he were himself to visit Kabul as our recognised representative he would be able to convince Sher Ali that we had no designs hostile to his interests, and that he would act wisely in entering into the closest and most loyal alliance with our Government. The proposals of Sir Jung Bahadur could not be entertained, but they were declined with an expression of sincere and cordial thanks, and the Resident at Khatmandu was authorised to explain confidentially to the Minister the Viceroy's views of the whole situation.

The news of the constant and intimate correspondence which was now carried on between the Russian General and the Amir of Kabul had one salutary effect. It finally convinced the members of the Viceroy's Council that the time for a purely inactive policy was over, and that one of more active interference must now be insisted upon. 'The neck of the opposition on this subject has been broken,' writes the Viceroy to Lord Salisbury, 'and I anticipate no further difficulty in carrying out my own views.'

Amir's reply, received Sept. 3

Amir proposes to send British native agent to India

On September 3 the Commissioner of Peshawur received the Amir's reply to the letter which had been addressed to him on July 8. This reply contained the suggestion that our native agent at Kabul, who had long been acquainted with the wishes of the Amir, should be summoned to his own Government, to expound to them the state of affairs at Kabul, and hear from them all their desires and projects, returning then to Kabul to repeat to the Amir the result of such intercourse.

This was much what Lord Lytton had anticipated,

and he decided without hesitation to accept the Amir's proposal.

Viceroy accepts the suggestion

An answer accordingly was immediately sent to the Amir, to the effect that his proposal was accepted by the Government of India, as being 'altogether advantageous to the realisation of their chief object, which was to ascertain the actual sentiments of his Highness.'

British native agent reaches Simla Oct. 6

Atta Mahomed Khan, the British native agent, reached Simla on October 6.

After being closely cross-examined by Sir Lewis Pelly, Colonel Burne, the Viceroy's Private Secretary, and Captain Gray, a personal friend of the Amir's Prime Minister, the agent had two interviews with the Viceroy himself. The substance of these several conversations has already been made public, and it is therefore only necessary to give a short summary of them. The agent, after first denying that there existed any grievance in the mind of the Amir, was induced to make a full confession of the complaints which he nourished against us and of the demands which he still had at heart. The Viceroy then confided to the agent how far he was prepared to accede to these demands, and upon what terms.

The agent represented the Amir as chiefly alienated and disappointed by the results of the mission in 1873 of his Minister Syud Noor Mahomed to Lord Northbrook. The principal object of that mission, on the part of the Amir, had been to secure a definite treaty of alliance with the British Government; a guarantee that he would receive support in the shape of arms and money in every case of external aggression; that the British Government should disclaim connection with any pretender to the throne of Kabul, and agree to recognise and support

Conference with native agent at Simla

only his declared heir; finally, that he should receive a permanent subsidy to enable him to support his troops.

These demands the British Government of Lord Northbrook's time had refused to grant, and from that time the Amir had distrusted us, and had derived the impression that our policy and action in his regard had been for our own self-interest, irrespective of the interests of Afghanistan; that while we desired to depute political agents into Afghanistan and induce the Amir to guide his policy by our advice, we were unprepared to bind ourselves to any future course in regard to him. He had thus come to question our consistency and good faith; while his counsellors were habitually seeking hidden meanings in our communications.

As regards the Amir's objections to receiving the mission which the Viceroy had proposed sending to Kabul, the agent stated that His Highness entertained no hope of an improvement in our mutual relations, and thought therefore no practical result would follow from the mission; that his presence might create excitement, and be attended by personal risk; that if a British mission were received at Kabul, a pretext would be afforded the Russians for sending a similar one. Recent political history in Europe showed that the English were unable to compel the Russians to adhere to treaties, and were equally impotent to arrest Russian aggressions. The Amir was well aware that, sooner or later, Russia would attack Afghanistan, and this with ulterior objects; but his Highness also knew that in such a crisis the British would defend him in their own interests. Finally, the agent averred, and this greatly interested the Viceroy, that the Amir's reluctance to admit

British officers within his territory arose out of a fear not that they would be murdered, but that in the present unfriendly state of his relations with us they would be regarded by his subjects as persons deputed, not to support, but to control or check, his authority, and in that case the Afghans would make of such agents the confidants of all their grievances, and claim from them the protection and goodwill of the British Government *versus* the Amir.

Conference with native agent at Simla

Privately to Captain Gray the agent mentioned the matters which the Amir and his advisers had most at heart.

1. That no Englishman should reside in Afghanistan, at any rate at Kabul.
2. That the British Government should agree to recognise and support the declared heir Abdullah Jan, and should disclaim connection with Mahomed Yakub or any pretender.
3. That we should agree to support the Amir with troops and money against all external aggression.
4. That we should grant them some permanent subsidy. At present the treasury of the Amir was empty, the revenue quite inadequate to the maintenance of his force of some 75,000 troops. Consequently the force was underpaid, ill found, and inefficient. The Amir was also anxious to obtain a *pied à terre* in British territory, whither to send his family and property when he cleared for action with the Russians.
5. That the British Government should refrain from internal interference in Afghanistan.
6. That we should enter into an offensive and defensive alliance, equally binding to both parties.

**Conference with native agent at Simla**

Having fully heard these complaints and demands, the Viceroy personally informed the agent what concessions he was prepared to make to the Afghan ruler, and upon what terms.

1. He was willing to enter into an alliance such as had been demanded—namely, that the friends and enemies of either State should be those of the other.
2. That in the event of unprovoked external aggression, assistance should be afforded the Amir in men, money, and arms. Also that the British Government were willing to assist him in fortifying his frontier.
3. That Abdullah Jan should be recognised as the Amir's successor.
4. That a yearly subsidy should be offered the Amir, the amount of which and other details to be settled by Plenipotentiaries.

These concessions amounted to a promise to grant all the requests which had been denied to the Amir at the Simla Conference of 1873, and which, had they then been granted, might perhaps have secured Sher Ali as a firm and friendly ally to the British Government.

The conditions attached to the proposed concessions were as follows:

That the Amir held no external relations without our knowledge, and refrained from provoking his neighbours.

That he declined all communication with Russia, referring the agents of that Power to us. That British agents should reside at Herat, or elsewhere on the frontier.

That a mixed Commission of British and Afghan officers should determine and demarcate the Amir's

frontier. That arrangements should be made for the free circulation of trade along the principal trade routes of Afghanistan and for the establishment of a line of telegraph.

Conference with native agent at Simla

Finally, the Viceroy would forego the establishment of a permanent Envoy at Kabul on condition that the Amir deputed an envoy to the Viceroy's headquarters and that he received special missions whenever requested.

If the Amir was prepared to treat on the above basis he might at once send his minister Syud Noor Mahomed Shah to meet Sir Lewis Pelly at Peshawur, Jellalabad, or wherever might be preferred. The Viceroy, however, clearly explained to the British agent that unless the Amir gave his consent to the establishment of a British agency on the frontier as a basis of negotiation it would be needless for him to depute his minister to meet the Viceroy's Envoy, and the Viceroy would then be free to adopt his own course in his re-arrangement of frontier relations without regard to Afghan interests.

Sir Lewis Pelly regretted this conditional stipulation, having been alarmed by the agent's strong expression of opinion that the Amir would not consent to the establishment of British agencies on his frontier. The Viceroy, however, held firmly that negotiations entered into without any accepted basis of principle would after protracted discussions end in a public failure and increased misunderstandings.

A remark made by the Viceroy in the course of these interviews with the native agent became the subject of attack by the Opposition at home as if it had been made to the Amir himself or to his representative, whereas it must be remembered that this

Conference with native agent at Simla

agent was a confidential servant of the Government of India, usually resident at Kabul, but bound to act in our interests and to represent our views there. Lord Lytton wrote of this matter after his return to England: 'I said to the agent that the position of the Amir was that of an earthen pipkin between two iron pots [1]; but I never addressed those words directly to the Amir, or to any agent of his. My motive for using such an expression in conversation with our own native agent was that I found him under a totally false and exaggerated impression as to the power of the Amir, and it was necessary to make him understand the real character of the situation. But the words I did deliberately address to the Amir through this agent I was careful to write down, in order that they might be accurately conveyed to His Highness.' As the short Memorandum which the agent was instructed by the Viceroy to communicate to the Amir for this purpose contains a complete refutation of the charge that he attempted either to bully or deceive Sher Ali, it may be quoted here.

Viceroy's Memorandum

'I authorise the agent to tell the Amir that, if His Highness wishes to make me his friend, I will be a warm and a true, a firm and a fast friend to him, doing all that is practically in my power to stand by him in his difficulties, to cordially support him, to strengthen his throne, establish his dynasty, and confirm his succession in the person of his selected heir.

'I am willing to give him, if he wishes it, a treaty of friendship and alliance, to afford him assistance in arms, men, and money, and to give to his heir the public recognition and support of the

[1] This simile was first used by Sir B. Frere in his letter to Lord Salisbury, March 3, 1876.

British Government. But we cannot do these things unless the Amir is, on his part, equally willing to give us the means of assisting him in the protection of his frontier, by the residence of a British agent at Herat, or such other parts of the frontier most exposed to danger from without as may hereafter be mutually agreed upon. I do not wish to embarrass the Amir, with whose difficulties I fully sympathise, by carrying out any such arrangement until after the signature of a treaty of alliance on terms which ought to satisfy His Highness of the perfect loyalty of our friendship, nor until after he has had the means of satisfying his people that the presence of a British agent on his frontier signifies our firm support of himself and his Heir Apparent with all the power and influence of the British Government. Nor have I any wish to urge upon the Amir the reception of a permanent British Envoy at his Court, if His Highness thinks it would be a source of embarrassment to him.

Viceroy's Memorandum

'In short, it is my object and desire that our alliance and the presence of our agents on the Afghan frontier should be a great strength and support to the Amir at home and abroad—not a source of weakness or embarrassment to him.'

Referring to this Memorandum in a paper written in 1880, Lord Lytton wrote: 'Neither to Sher Ali nor to Yakub Khan did I ever propose, much less did I ever urge on either of them, the establishment of a Resident British Mission at Kabul. I sincerely believe that such an arrangement would have been extremely beneficial to the two Governments, had they mutually desired it. But it could not be advantageously pressed on a reluctant prince. Our view was that if Sher Ali no longer desired to

Viceroy's Memorandum

draw closer to the British Government, there was nothing to be done. But if he were still as solicitous as he professed to be in 1872 that we should pay greater attention to his boundaries and increase our liabilities on his behalf, then we might reasonably claim his cordial acquiescence in the only means which could practically enable us to satisfy his wishes.'

At the end of October the agent returned to Kabul, carrying with him a letter from the Viceroy to the Amir, and an *aide-mémoire* which he was authorised to communicate to His Highness containing a summary of the conversations he had recently held with the Viceroy, concerning the concessions he was prepared on certain conditions to offer the Amir.

To those communications no direct reply was made for several months. In the meantime, events in Europe were not without their effect upon the Amir. Throughout India and Asia there was a prevalent expectation that hostilities between Russia and Turkey were imminent and must lead to war between Russia and England, and on the eve of such an event the Amir had no intention of committing himself to an English alliance; his policy was to stand aloof till the latest possible moment, and then, when a strict neutrality was no longer possible, to sell his alliance to the highest bidder.

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Lord Lytton's Instructions

The most important passages of the instructions relating to Afghanistan which Lord Lytton took out with him were as follows:

They began by suggesting that the best course of procedure might be—after previous communication with the Amir, through the Commissioner of Peshawur—to send a mission to Kabul by way of Quettah. They then went on as follows:

'The ostensible function of such a mission would, in either case, be one of compliment and courtesy, and the Amir's friendly reception of

Lord Lytton's Instructions

it might, in the first instance, be taken for granted. But you will, of course, be careful not to expose the dignity of your Government to the affront of a publicly rejected courtesy, and should the Amir express to the Commissioner of Peshawur an insurmountable objection to the reception of the proposed mission, you will, perhaps, deem it expedient to limit its destination to Khelat. In that case you may have to reconsider your whole line of policy as regards Afghanistan; but you will, at least, be enabled to do this with diminished uncertainty as to the personal sentiments or political tendencies which determine the value now set by Sher Ali upon the friendship and support of the Government of India. . . .

'To invite the confidence of the Amir will be the primary purpose of your agent. To secure that confidence must be the ultimate object of your Government. But to invite confidence is to authorise the frank utterance of hopes which it may be impossible to satisfy, and fears which it may be dangerous to confirm. Whether these hopes and fears be reasonable or the reverse, their open avowal is, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, preferable to their concealment.

'It is necessary, however, that you should be prepared for demands or inquiries which cannot be altogether unanticipated in the course of confidential intercourse with the Amir. In the conduct of such intercourse you will be, above all things, careful to avoid evasions or ambiguities calculated to leave upon the mind of a prince whom temperament has made suspicious, and events mistrustful, any legitimate doubt as to the plenitude of your power or the firmness of your policy.

'The maintenance in Afghanistan of a strong and friendly power has at all times been the object of British policy. The attainment of this object is now to be considered with due reference to the situation created by the recent and rapid advance of the Russian army in Central Asia towards the northern frontiers of British India.

'Her Majesty's Government cannot view with complete indifference the probable influence of that situation upon the uncertain character of an Oriental Chief, whose ill-defined dominions are thus brought within a steadily narrowing circle, between the conflicting pressures of two great military empires, one of which expostulates and remains passive, whilst the other apologises and continues to move forward.

'It is well known that not only the English newspapers, but also all works published in England upon Indian questions, are rapidly translated for the information of the Amir and carefully studied by His Highness.

'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 Sher 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. Whether the passivity of that power, in presence of a situation thus unofficially discussed with disquietude, be attributed by the

Lord Lytton's Instructions

Amir to connivance with the political designs or fear of the military force of his Russian neighbours, the inference, although erroneous, is in either case prejudicial to our influence in Afghanistan.

'The Russian ambassador at the Court of St. James has been officially informed by Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that the objects of British policy as regards Afghanistan are:

'1st. To secure that State against aggression.

'2nd. To promote tranquillity on the borders of that country, by giving such moral and material support to the Amir, without interfering in the internal affairs of his country, as may enable Her Majesty's Government to prevent a recurrence of the disturbances and conflicts between rival candidates for power among his own family, or the Mirs of the different Provinces.

'Her Majesty's Government would not, therefore, view with indifference any attempt on the part of Russia to compete with British influence in Afghanistan; nor could the Amir's reception of a British agent (whatever be the official rank or function of that agent) in any part of the dominions belonging to His Highness afford for his subsequent reception of a Russian agent similarly accredited any pretext to which the Government of Her Majesty would not be entitled to except as incompatible with the assurances spontaneously offered to it by the Cabinet of St. Petersburg.

'You will bear in mind these facts, when framing secret instructions for your Minister to Kabul. . . .

'To demands which you have no intention of conceding your agent will oppose a frank and firm refusal. You will instruct him to prevent such demands from becoming subjects of discussion. Others which, under certain conditions, you may be willing to entertain, he will undertake to refer to your Government, with such favourable assurances as may induce the Amir to recognise the advantages of facilitating by compliance with your wishes the fulfilment of his own.

'If the language and demeanour of the Amir be such as to promise no satisfactory result of the negotiations thus opened, His Highness should be distinctly reminded that he is isolating himself, at his own peril, from the friendship and protection it is his interest to seek and deserve.

'The requests which may be made by Sher Ali in connection with his reception of permanent British agents in Afghanistan will probably raise the question of granting to His Highness:

'1st. A fixed and augmented subsidy.

'2nd. A more decided recognition than has yet been accorded by the Government of India to the order of succession established by him in favour of the younger son Abdullah Jan.

'3rd. An explicit pledge, by treaty or otherwise, of material support in case of foreign aggression.

Lord Lytton's Instructions

'The first of these questions is of secondary magnitude. You will probably deem it inexpedient to commit your Government to any permanent pecuniary obligation on behalf of a neighbour whose conduct and character have hitherto proved uncertain. On the other hand, you may possibly find it worth while to increase from time to time the amount of pecuniary assistance which up to the present moment the Amir has been receiving. But your decision on this point can only be determined by circumstances which have not arisen, and considerations which must be left to your appreciation of such circumstances.

'With regard to the recognition of Abdullah Jan, whose selection as legitimate successor to the throne of his father has been made with much solemnity by Sher Ali, and ostensibly acquiesced in by the most influential of the Afghan chiefs,

'Her Majesty's Government, in considering this question, have before them the solid and deliberate declarations made in 1869 by Lord Northbrook's predecessor to the present Amir, viz. "that 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 been lately more closely drawn than heretofore, it will view with severe displeasure any attempts on the part of your rivals to disturb your position as ruler of Kabul and rekindle civil war; and it will further endeavour from time to time, by such means as circumstances may require, to strengthen the Government of your Highness to enable you to exercise with equity and with justice your rightful rule, and to transmit to your descendants all the dignities and honours of which you are the lawful possessor."

'The Government of India having in 1869 made that declaration, which was approved by Her Majesty's advisers, have not based upon it any positive measures; while to the Amir, who had received that declaration under circumstances of some solemnity and parade, it appears to have conveyed a pledge of definite action in his favour.

'It is not surprising that these conflicting interpretations of an ambiguous formula should have occasioned mutual disappointment to His Highness and the Government of India.

'Her Majesty's Government do not desire to renounce their traditional policy of abstention from all unnecessary interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. But the frank recognition of a *de facto* order in the succession established by a *de facto* 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 order of succession in Afghanistan has always been dictated by the incumbent of the throne, though it has generally been disputed by each aspirant to the vacated position of that incumbent.

'It remains to consider the question of giving to the Amir a definite assurance of material support in case of internal aggression

Lord Lytton's Instructions

upon those territories over which Her Majesty's Government has publicly recognised and officially maintained his right of sovereignty.

'With or without any such assurance, England would be impelled by her own interests to assist His Highness in repelling the invasion of his territory by a foreign Power. It is therefore on all accounts desirable that the Government of India should have at its disposal adequate means for the prevention of a catastrophe which may yet be averted by prudence and the fulfilment of an obligation which, should it ever arise, could not be evaded with honour. The want of such means constitutes the weakness of the present situation.

'In the year 1875 Lord Northbrook gave to the Envoy of the Amir the personal assurance that, in the event of any aggression upon the territories of His Highness which the British Government had failed to avert by negotiation, that Government would be prepared to assure the Amir that they will afford him assistance in the shape of arms and money, and will also, in case of necessity, assist him with troops.

'The terms of this declaration, however, although sufficient to justify reproaches on the part of Sher Ali if, in the contingency to which it referred, he should be left unsupported by the British Government, were unfortunately too ambiguous to secure confidence or inspire gratitude on the part of His Highness.

'The Amir, in fact, appears to have remained under a resentful impression that his Envoy had been trifled with, and his attitude towards the Government of India has ever since been characterised by ambiguity and reserve.

'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 Amir, and it must be distinctly understood that only in some clear case of unprovoked aggression would such an obligation arise.

'In the next place, they cannot secure the integrity of the Amir's dominions unless His Highness be willing to afford them every reasonable facility for such precautionary measures as they may deem requisite. These precautionary measures by no means involve the establishment of British garrisons in any part of Afghanistan, nor do Her Majesty's Government entertain the slightest desire to quarter British soldiers upon Afghan soil; but they must have for their own agents undisputed access to its frontier positions. They must also have adequate means of confidentially conferring with the Amir upon all matters as to which the proposed declaration would recognise a community of interests. They must be entitled to expect becoming attention to their friendly counsels; and the Amir must be made to

Lord Lytton's Instructions

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.

'Her Majesty's Government are also of opinion that the establishment, if possible, of a telegraph from some point on the Indian frontier to Kabul, viâ the Kurum Valley, is an object deserving of consideration, and the permanent presence at the Viceregal Court of a properly accredited Afghan Envoy is much to be desired, as a guarantee for the due fulfilment of counter obligations on the part of the Amir and the uninterrupted facility of your confidential relations with His Highness. Subject to these general conditions, Her Majesty's Government can see no objection to your compliance with any reasonable demand on the part of Sher Ali for more assured respect and protection, such as pecuniary assistance, the advice of British officers in the improvement of his military organisation, or a promise, not vague, but strictly guarded and clearly circumscribed, of adequate aid against actual and unprovoked attack by any foreign power.

'Such a promise personally given to the Amir will probably satisfy His Highness, if the terms of it be unequivocal. But Her Majesty's Government do not wish to fetter your discretion in considering the advantages of a secret treaty on the basis above dictated.

'The conduct of Sher Ali has been more than once characterised by so significant a disregard of the wishes and interests of the Government of India that the alienation of his confidence in the sincerity and power of that Government is a contingency which cannot be dismissed as impossible.

'Should such a fear be confirmed by the result of the proposed negotiation, no time must be lost in reconsidering from a new point of view the policy to be pursued in reference to Afghanistan.

'On the other hand, the success of these efforts (which, if they be made at all, cannot be safely delayed) will be pregnant with results so advantageous to the British power in India that Her Majesty's Government willingly leave to the exercise of your judgment every reasonable freedom in carrying out the present instructions.'

These instructions Lord Lytton took out with him. It will be seen from them that the Government at home, while suggesting the lines on which negotiations with the Amir might be conducted and a new treaty framed, practically left the Viceroy free to choose the time and manner in which these instructions should be carried out.

## CHAPTER III

### TREATY WITH THE KHAN OF KHELAT

WHILE the overture to Sher Ali had so far been fruitless of good result, negotiations with the Khan of Khelat were most satisfactorily terminated in a treaty signed by the Khan and his Sirdars with the Viceroy and Government of India at Jacobabad on December 8.

The dominion over which the Khan of Khelat claims chief authority embraces the whole province of Beloochistan, being bounded on the north by Afghanistan, on the south by the Arabian Sea, on the west by Persia, and on the east by the British provinces of Sindh and the Punjab.

Minutes and Notes, 1876

In a confidential Memorandum submitted to his Council on the subject of our relations with Khelat the Viceroy wrote: 'The history of this country is that of all feudal States. It is a chronicle of turbulent ambitions and barbaric intrigues engendered by a social chaos out of which no cosmical order has yet been evolved; a sanguinary narrative of incessant defections and revolts, incessant submissions and reconquests; the barons fighting for their cherished liberty to be lawless; the titular ruler unable to consolidate or develop his theoretical authority, and barely able to secure his personal safety by adroitly playing off this chief or that tribe against some other tribe or chief.'

History of Khelat

Up to the year 1872 it had been the policy of successive agents at the Court of the Khan to uphold the authority of the existing ruler, while endeavouring to interfere as little as possible in the internal affairs of the country; but in the years 1870 and 1871 an unfortunate rivalry sprang up between the Punjab and Sindh systems of policy and their official representatives. Colonel Phayre, political superintendent at Khelat, took up the cause of the disaffected Sirdars, and was supported by Captain Sandeman, the official representative of the Punjab Government. Sir William Merewether, however, Commissioner of Sindh, strongly opposed this policy. These three gentlemen were authorised by the supreme Government to meet at Jacobabad, investigate the complaints of the Sirdars, and mediate between them and the Khan. To this conference Lord Lytton traces the origin of all the subsequent difficulties in Khelat. It resulted in the removal of Colonel Phayre and the recall of Captain Sandeman. Sir William Merewether was left to conclude the mediation alone, but though his decision was in the main against the Sirdars it left the Khan 'deeply incensed and offended by a mediation which admitted his rebellious Sirdars to be heard and treated by the British Government as his equals.' 'The Trojan war,' wrote Lord Lytton, 'would probably have been of brief duration had the conduct of it been left to the craft and cruelty of ordinary mortals. But certain bellicose divinities espoused the rival claims of Argives and Trojans, and took a pleasure of their own in prolonging the conflict. In the same way our Sindh and Punjab officers transferred to the Olympian altitudes of the supreme Government a series of miserable quarrels only appropriate to their barbarian birthplace.'

Minutes and Notes, 1876

Minutes and Notes, 1876

From this time forward matters grew worse and worse. 'Outrage followed outrage, and no satisfaction could be obtained by the British Government.' A daring inroad was made by some Brahooe tribes on British territory; it remained unredressed. The Khan's subsidy was stopped and our agent withdrew from his Court, bringing with him the ex-minister Wullee Mahomed. Sir William Merewether then recommended an armed intervention in Khelat and deposition of the present Khan.

Sandeman's first mission, November, 1875

This proposal was not looked upon with favour by the British Government, and it was decided to send Captain Sandeman into the Murree Hills for the settlement of some of our disputes with the tribes in that district. He started on November 22, 1875.

Lord Lytton remarks that in reading through the official papers on the subject of our relations with Khelat he has often found cause to appreciate the wisdom of a maxim attributed to the King of Burmah. 'There is to everything,' says His Majesty, 'a beginning, a middle, and an end. You should never go beyond the beginning until you are sure of the middle; when you get to the middle, you should never forget the beginning; and neither at the beginning nor the middle should you ever lose sight of the end.' 'It appears to me,' he adds, 'that in the middle of our relations with Khelat we have sometimes forgotten the beginning; at least between our policy at one time and our policy at another there seems to be a complete solution of continuity, and I greatly fear that at the present moment we are in some danger of being hurried, or beguiled, towards an end not clearly foreseen or deliberately desired.'

The general results of Major Sandeman's first mission were, that after hearing the complaints of the

chiefs he had ascertained from them that they would welcome British mediation, and that they were willing to become peaceable subjects of the Khan on certain conditions, that moreover they had been induced to make a conditional submission to the Khan. Further, that the Khan himself was willing to submit to British mediation, and was prepared to submit his case directly to the Government.

Minutes and Notes, 1876

The Government of India, on receipt of Major Sandeman's report (of February 1876), decided in accordance with the advice given it by Colonel Munro and the Punjab Government, that it was worth while to take advantage of the opening thus offered and allow Major Sandeman to make another attempt at mediation; with the advantage, this time, of enlarged instructions and a recognised position. The 'instructions,' however, were again of a vague character, and, much to Lord Lytton's surprise, they were not conveyed in writing.

Major Sandeman's second mission, April 4

Major Sandeman started on this second mission three days before Lord Lytton himself landed in India. The news was conveyed to Lord Lytton at Bombay, and entirely upset his original intention—approved by the Government at home—of sending a confidential mission first of all to Khelat, and thence, after the satisfactory settlement of our relations with the Khan, to Kabul *viâ* Kandahar.

The character of Major Sandeman's mission was so much at variance with the principle which Lord Lytton desired to adopt as the basis of his foreign policy—viz. 'that of treating all frontier questions as parts of a whole question, and not as separate questions having no relation to each other'—that he telegraphed and wrote to Lord Northbrook on his way to Calcutta, 'urging him to suspend the mission of Major

Minutes and Notes, 1876

Sandeman, who had not then entered Khelat territory,' until his assumption of office, which took place a few days later, in order that he might 'have an opportunity of reconsidering, and if necessary revising, Major Sandeman's instructions in connection with the views and plans' he had already formed with regard to his whole frontier policy, and of associating his mission, if possible, more directly with the attainment of the object he had in view.

This suggestion, however, was not accepted by Lord Northbrook, who was ignorant of the grounds on which it had been urged, and Lord Lytton was forced, therefore, to recast the arrangements he had contemplated in a form, he thought, less favourable to their success.

Major Sandeman in the meanwhile received at first answers both from the chiefs and from the Khan that were not encouraging. On June 5, however, he was able to telegraph that the Khan, after receiving the Viceroy's (Lord Northbrook's) letter, was willing to consent to the mediation of the British Government, that he had overcome his objections to leaving Khelat, and that he consented to meet his chiefs and Major Sandeman at Mastung. On June 16 Major Sandeman further telegraphed the terms of settlement proposed by the Khan and acceptable to the Sirdars.

These terms as they were first drawn up did not meet with the Viceroy's approval. They were, he thought, too humiliating to the dignity of the Khan and too favourable to the rebellious chiefs. The effect of such a treaty would, he believed, greatly impede his negotiations with the Amir of Afghanistan.

Although it subsequently became inevitable to dissociate our policy in Beloochistan from that adopted towards Afghanistan, the Viceroy at this

time was anxious not to deal with the one frontier State without carefully considering how his action would affect the other, and he felt that the importance of all frontier questions was enhanced by the struggle which might be pending between ourselves and Russia, on our side for the maintenance, on theirs for the acquisition, of imperial power and influence in the East.

The Viceroy in a long letter to Major Sandeman indicated the objects which should be borne in mind in drafting the new Treaty with the Khan.

1. The maintenance of a commanding influence in Khelat.
2. The support of a strong and settled Government there.
3. The freedom and security of the Bolan Pass, and other trade routes.
4. The pacification of Kutchee, and the speedy development of its great natural wealth.
5. With regard to Quettah, the importance of which station in the event of a frontier war he fully realised, he was in favour of placing there a British officer and hospital as a means of increasing the social and political influence of the English over the surrounding neighbourhood, without at present availing themselves of a treaty right to occupy that place.

The Viceroy's military secretary, Colonel Colley, was dispatched to Major Sandeman with full powers to explain to that officer the views of the Government, and bearing letters from the Viceroy to Major Sandeman and the Khan. In this letter the Viceroy proposed to come himself to Jacobabad for the signature of the new Treaty, and invited the

Khan to follow him afterwards to Delhi on the occasion of the proclamation of the Queen as Empress.

Colonel Colley reached Khelat on October 14, and on the 18th, at a grand Durbar, presented to the Khan the Viceroy's letter and invitation. The invitation was accepted, and the Khan at once made arrangements for meeting the Viceroy at the time and place appointed.

The Viceroy starts for Jacobabad

Early in November the Viceroy, accompanied by Lady Lytton and suite, commenced his march from Simla towards the frontier. On November 15 he writes

Letter to the Queen, November 15

from Camp Dalhousie to the Queen: 'I must now ask your Majesty's permission to say a few words on the subject of our frontier relations, which derive special importance from the present critical condition of the Eastern Question. To begin with Khelat. Through the territories of this State your Majesty's Indian Empire is most open to attack, either from the Russian army of the Caspian, or from Afghanistan if the Amir of Kabul were to enter into any alliance hostile to us. The assured co-operation or allegiance of this State in case of war is therefore essential to our means of defence or aggression. Six months ago Khelat was seething with civil war; the conduct of the Khan had been so unsatisfactory that we had broken off relations with His Highness, and no power remained in the State strong enough, or friendly enough, to control the predatory border tribes, who had rendered all the trade routes impassable, and were with impunity incessantly devastating our own territory and plundering our own subjects. Some of the most experienced political officers of your Majesty's Indian Government advised the Government to depose the Khan and take forcible possession

of his country; others proposed that we should enter into separate relations with the tribes, and purchase their good behaviour (as the Romans of the lower empire purchased that of the Barbarians) by paying them subsidies. The first of these two proposals appeared to me injudicious, and indeed impracticable. The second proposal also seemed to me pusillanimous and unworthy of a great empire. I have now, however, the satisfaction of being able to inform your Majesty that the Khan of Khelat has agreed to sign with me a Treaty, the terms of which will make us virtually the masters of Khelat, not by annexing the country, but by re-establishing the Khan's authority on conditions which secure his implicit allegiance. This Treaty puts an end to civil war in Khelat, and provides, I think, adequate guarantees against its recurrence. It is hailed with satisfaction by the Sirdars and the tribes, as well as by the prince himself; and it secures for ever to the British Government the right and the power to place British troops at any time in any part of the khanate. In anticipation of the conclusion of the Treaty, and in view of the uncertain character of our present relations with Russia, I have, with the full assent—and indeed at the express request—of the Khan, already thrown a small British force into Quettah, a post of great strategical importance in the event of war. The trade routes have been re-opened, and commerce has peaceably resumed its customary course. The Khan agrees to meet me on my march round the frontier for the purpose of signing this Treaty, and afterwards to attend the Imperial assemblage at Delhi, accompanied by all his principal Sirdars, for the purpose of there publicly doing homage to your Majesty as his Suzerain. I anticipate from this arrangement a

great increase to our influence and prestige beyond the frontier.'

Treaty of Jacobabad

On the evening of December 7 the Viceroy and his staff reached Jacobabad, and the Treaty with the Khan and all his Sirdars was executed on December 8. A description of the ceremony is given in a letter from the Viceroy to Sir Henry Norman, dated 'River Indus *en route* for Kurrachee, December 12.'

'Now I must, I fear, be more brief than I could wish in my narration of the general results of my exceedingly interesting visit to Jacobabad. Early in the morning after my arrival, I received, in a great public durbar, the Khan (who had previously telegraphed to me *en route* offering to meet me on the road, an offer which I declined with thanks) and all his Sirdars, not one of whom was absent. The little Khan was obviously very nervous or very much alarmed, and trembled violently when I led him to his seat. The durbar was most picturesque and uncouth. Immediately afterwards I made him a return visit, which was purely complimentary; and after luncheon, as soon as the English levee was over, I had a private interview with the Khan, his chief Sirdars and Ministers, Thornton, Munro, Sandeman, Burne, and Colley only. The Treaty was then signed quite privately, without any salvoes or public demonstrations, as I think it best not to publish it immediately; and I addressed both the Khan and the Sirdars at some length in explanation of their mutual obligations to each other and to us, under the terms of it. To these injunctions and warnings the response from both sides was all that could be wished. Both Khan and Sirdars appeared to understand every clause of the Treaty thoroughly, and to be equally delighted with it.

They left me about sunset, and, this being the hour of prayer, they all knelt down together outside the house before mounting their horses, and offered thanks to Allah for the day's event. Khan and Sirdars are now on their way to Delhi. . . . [The Khan] has the furtive face and restless eye of a little hunted wild beast which has long lived in daily danger of its life. But his manners are good, and as soon as it loses its expression of alarm and mistrust his countenance is not unpleasing.'

Major Sandeman, to whose tact and ability the success of the Treaty was largely due, was appointed the representative of the British Government at the Court of the Khan, with an agent under him at Quettah. He was henceforth to correspond direct with the Government of India.

Lord Lytton communicated to him this news in the following letter of congratulation:

To Major Sandeman, Dec. 9, 1876

'My dear Major Sandeman,—I must congratulate you cordially on the complete success of your difficult and anxious mission, and ask you to accept my thanks for the services you have rendered to my Government, and to India, by enabling us to effect a satisfactory re-organisation of our relations with Khelat, which I think likely to become ere long much more important than they have ever been before. I have recommended you to the Secretary of State for a C.S.I., and shall take an early opportunity of officially acknowledging the good work you have done.

'The conclusion of the Treaty signed yesterday between myself and the Khan virtually terminates your mission, and thus raises the question of redistributing your escort and fixing your future position and duties, &c.

'I am not surprised to learn from Colonel Burne

that after your trying labours of the last nine months, you feel the need of rest; and I need not say that on this point I am most anxious to meet your own wishes, whatever they may be, or the consideration of any arrangement that is safe and practicable. But I feel so strongly that just at present, and, indeed, so long as our relations with Russia and Afghanistan remain in their present ambiguous and critical position, your continued presence and influence in Khelat are so absolutely necessary to secure and confirm the results of the recent Treaty, that I anxiously trust it may be compatible with your convenience not to withdraw them till matters are a little more settled. I think that you should have under your orders a very intelligent and trustworthy agent in whose tact, adroitness, and loyalty you can place implicit confidence. I anticipate that Quettah will henceforth be the seat of our most important Intelligence Department in regard to trans-frontier politics; and, indeed, as soon as the pacification of Khelat is completely assured, the main work of your diplomacy in that Khanate will be to extend our influence quietly, peacefully, but, if possible, rapidly from Quettah in the direction of Kandahar. These considerations I cannot attempt to develop, or discuss in the present letter. It is desirable that you should now address your official correspondence *direct* to my Foreign Department.

'Yours, my dear Major Sandeman,

'Very sincerely,

'LYTTON.'

Writing in 1880 of this Treaty Lord Lytton says: 'The Bolan Pass, then re-opened, has never since been closed. During the Afghan campaign of 1878 not a single British soldier was maintained or a

single robbery committed in that pass. Throughout the country villages have been rebuilt, and trade and agriculture not only restored but powerfully stimulated. The revenues of the Khan and the wealth of his subjects have been largely increased; they are still rapidly increasing; both the sovereign and the people are contented; and our Khelat border is perfectly quiet. . . . I am at a loss to understand how our intervention in Khelat could injuriously affect the Amir of Kabul. But be that as it may, the propriety of a policy which was intended to rescue, and which actually did rescue, Beloochistan from horrible anarchy, and restore it not only to peace but prosperity, was a matter to be conducted on its own merits without reference to the light in which it might be viewed by Sher Ali. The occupation of Quettah was indispensable to the success of that policy, for the Khan could not be adequately supported without it. The measure was adopted at the request of His Highness and his Sirdars, and carried out in accordance with treaty rights of long standing. There is only one word I wish to add on the subject of Khelat . . . Consider how terribly the difficulties, the anxieties, and the expense of the Government of India would have been augmented if the condition of that country, and our relations with it, had been in '78 or in '80 such as I found them in '76!'

The close of the year 1876 found the Viceroy and his suite in camp at Delhi for the proclamation of the Queen-Empress. This historical ceremony will be described in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER IV

## DELHI ASSEMBLAGE

Queen's title in India

WHEN the administration of India was transferred from the East India Company to the Sovereign, it seemed in the eyes of her Indian subjects and feudatories that the impersonal power of an administrative abstraction had been replaced by the direct personal authority of a human being. This was a change thoroughly congenial to all their traditional sentiments, but without some appropriate title the Queen of England was scarcely less of an abstraction than the Company itself. The only Indian word corresponding to the English Queen—namely, *Malika*—was one commonly bestowed on the wife of an Indian prince and therefore entirely inapplicable to the true position of the British Sovereign in India. The title of Empress or Pádsháh could alone adequately represent her relations with the states and kingdoms of India, and was moreover a title familiar to the natives of the country, and an impressive and significant one in their eyes.

Embarrassments inseparable from the want of some appropriate title had long been experienced with increasing force by successive Indian administrations, and were brought, as it were, to a crisis by various circumstances incidental to the Prince of Wales's visit to India in 1875–76, and by a recommendation on the part of Lord Northbrook's

Government that it would be in accordance with fact, with the language of political documents, and with that in ordinary use, to speak of Her Majesty as the Sovereign of India—that is to say, the paramount power over all, including Native States.

It was accordingly announced in the speech from the throne in the session of 1876, that whereas when the direct government of the Indian Empire was assumed by the Queen no formal addition was made to the style and titles of the Sovereign, Her Majesty deemed that moment a fitting one for supplying the omission, and of giving thereby a formal and emphatic expression of the favourable sentiments which she had always entertained towards the princes and people of India.

Lord Lytton, on his arrival in India, found that this announcement, following directly upon the visit of the Prince of Wales, had 'set the whole native population on the *qui vive*,' their prevailing sentiment being one of 'anxious curiosity, with a little flutter of hope,' a hope which it might be dangerous to disappoint, and not only beneficial but easy to satisfy, and 'in so doing to convert popular satisfaction into a national enthusiasm, the force of which will be felt far beyond our frontier, and more than justify every argument' used for the defence of the measure.

The feeling of favourable expectation and satisfaction first excited by the prospect of the Queen's assumption of the new title was troubled and chilled by the unfortunate opposition to the Royal Titles Bill in its passage through Parliament. The title required to be rehabilitated in native imagination, and the final effect of its adoption would now depend on the manner and circumstances of its proclamation.

To the Viceroy this presented an opportunity of

Opportunity for enlisting sympathies of native aristocracy

inaugurating a new policy by virtue of which the Crown of England should henceforth be identified with the hopes, the aspirations, the sympathies and interests of a powerful native aristocracy. To do this would, he felt, materially diminish the dangers with which the Empire of India was then threatened by the condition of affairs in Central Asia.

In a letter to Mr. Disraeli, on April 30, he wrote:

'Nothing has struck me more in my intercourse thus far with Indian Rajas and Maharajas than the importance they attach to their family pedigrees and ancestral records. Here is a great feudal aristocracy which we cannot get rid of, which we are avowedly anxious to conciliate and command, but which we have as yet done next to nothing to rally round the British Crown as its *feudal* head. Every Raja I have yet conversed with has been curiously and amusingly anxious to convince me of the antiquity of his family, and the extent to which its importance has been recognised by the Suzerain Power at various times. Many of them have presented me with printed and illustrated genealogies and family records, lovingly edited by themselves and published at their own expense. Several of these genealogies are composed and printed in English. But what is worthy of notice is that in all of them I find evidence that small favours and marks of honour bestowed from time to time by the British Government on the head of the family (such as an additional gun to his salute, the right to a return visit from the Viceroy, or a more honourable place in durbar, &c.) are quite as highly prized and appreciated as the more substantial benefits (of augmented territory or revenue) conferred in earlier times upon their family by an Aurengzebe or an Akbar.'

Writing to Lord Salisbury, on May 11, he again enforces his view as to the importance of this appeal to sentiment. 'I am convinced that the fundamental political mistake of able and experienced Indian officials is a belief that we can hold India securely by what they call good government; that is to say, by improving the condition of the ryot, strictly administering justice, spending immense sums on irrigation works, &c. Politically speaking, the Indian peasantry is an inert mass. If it ever moves at all, it will move in obedience, not to its British benefactors, but to its native chiefs and princes, however tyrannical they may be. The only political representatives of native opinion are the Baboos, whom we have educated to write semi-seditious articles in the native Press, and who really represent nothing but the social anomaly of their own position. Look at the mistake which Austria made in the government of her Italian provinces. They were the best governed portions of Italy; she studied and protected the interests of the native peasantry; but, fearing the native *noblesse*, she snubbed and repressed it; when that *noblesse*, having nothing to gain or to hope from the continuation of her rule, conspired against it, the peasantry either remained passive or else followed the lead of its national superiors in attacking its alien benefactors. But the Indian chiefs and princes are not a mere *noblesse*. They are a powerful aristocracy. To secure completely, and efficiently utilise, the Indian aristocracy is, I am convinced, the most important problem now before us. I admit that it is not easy of immediate solution. For whilst, on the one hand, we require their cordial and willing allegiance, which is dependent on their sympathies and interests being in some way associated with the

interests of the British Power, on the other hand we certainly cannot afford to give them any increased political power independent of our own. Fortunately for us, however, they are easily affected by sentiment, and susceptible to the influence of symbols to which facts very inadequately correspond.'

By August 1876 the proposed scheme for the proclamation of the new title had been drawn up and had received the cordial support of the Viceroy's Council in India.

Kaisar-i-Hind, the title chosen for the Queen-Empress

The translation of the new title in the vernacular was a matter for careful consideration and consultation. The Government of India finally decided to adopt the term Kaisar-i-Hind. It was short, sonorous, expressive of the Imperial character which it was intended to convey, and a title, moreover, of classical antiquity, the term Kaisar-i-Room being that generally applied in Oriental literature to the Roman emperors, and still representing the title of emperor throughout Central Asia.

Plans for Delhi Assemblage

It was, moreover, decided that the new title should be announced at a great assemblage on the historical plain near Delhi, on January 1, 1877—in the presence of the heads of every government in India; of 1,200 of the noble band of civil servants; of 14,000 splendidly equipped and disciplined British and native troops; of seventy-seven of the ruling chiefs and princes of India, representing territories as large as Great Britain, France and Germany combined; and of 300 native noblemen and gentlemen besides. Altogether 68,000 were invited and did actually reside in Delhi and in its surrounding camps during the fourteen days of the Assemblage.

Had Lord Lytton been able wholly to carry out his policy with regard to the Delhi Assemblage the

acts of grace which accompanied the proclamation would have been of a more substantial and less formal character than they actually were.

Proposed measures in connection with Delhi Assemblage

He had desired to take this opportunity to establish an Indian Privy Council, forming a distinct and separate institution, restricted, at all events in the first instance, to the great chiefs, and empowered to consult with and advise the Viceroy from time to time on general matters of State. Occasions might arise on which such sympathy and counsel would be of extreme importance.

The Viceroy proposed at the same time to initiate a Native Peerage for the Empire of India and establish a Herald's College at Calcutta. Such an institution might, he considered, receive important development, not only as a matter of sentiment, but as a material addition to the forces of the Empire. The opposition, however, of certain authorities at home proved too strong for the schemes to be carried out in the way the Viceroy had planned them, and they were finally reduced to an association of some of the leading native princes, with the principal advisers of the Indian Government as 'Councillors of the Empress,' thus forming a nucleus for a future Indian Privy Council.

The further acts which were actually carried out in connection with the proclamation were as follows:

Measures actually adopted

Services hitherto inadequately recognised were rewarded; pensions enjoyed by ancient native families whose unquestioned loyalty had rendered them deserving of assistance were increased; numerous increased salaries for life were granted to the principal native chiefs; and to each chief entitled to a salute was presented, in the name of the Queen and with all due ceremony, a large silken banner bearing on one

side the Royal Arms and on the other his own. The banners were of diverse colours, varying according to the rank of the chief, and were to be carried henceforth at all State ceremonials in front of those to whom they were given. Gold and silver medals commemorative of the day were also struck and delivered respectively to each chief and to other selected persons from Her Majesty. Honorary titles were conferred—a reward very dear to the native mind—on more than 200 native noblemen and gentlemen; a large number of certificates of honour were presented to native and other gentlemen throughout India holding such offices as honorary magistrates and members of municipal councils; the pay and allowances to the commissioned and non-commissioned officers and men of the native army in India were increased, and a large number of appointments were made to the Order of British India.

There remained the more difficult task of devising some appropriate recognition on the part of Government of the claims of the British portion of the community, representing the power by which the Empire had been won and maintained in the past, and on which it depended for its consolidation and advancement in the present. The question was long and carefully considered, more especially as Lord Lytton was personally anxious that some such recognition should be made. Insuperable objections, however, were raised to some of the more material suggestions made by the Viceroy and it proved impossible finally to do more than give some appointments to the Order of the Star of India; to create an order specially open to non-official classes, now known as the 'Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire;' to improve in some degree the

position of British officers serving in native regiments; and to give a day's pay to the seamen and soldiers serving the Queen-Empress within Indian limits on the day of the proclamation.

On the day of the proclamation of the new title nearly 16,000 prisoners were released throughout British India, carrying the feeling of rejoicing to a vast number of individuals in remote districts, who but for this act of grace would probably never have heard of the occasion. It is creditable to the judgment with which the selections for release were made, that out of this number only two cases were brought to notice, after a considerable interval of time, in which prisoners so released were re-committed on criminal charges.

Viceroy to the Queen, Sept. 11

On September 11, the news of the proclamation having then been made public, Lord Lytton writes to the Queen: 'All the principal chiefs have responded with enthusiasm to my appeal, including even the Nizam, who was considered the most doubtful. I now reckon on the attendance of seventy-nine ruling chiefs, besides a vast number of minor chiefs. Our only difficulty, indeed, is now to restrain the size of the assemblage within reasonable limits. I need not say that the sanitary and other arrangements, as well as the supply of food for so large a concourse of human beings, besides horses, camels, and elephants, require much care and forethought. The whole Press of this country, English and native, has received the announcement of the assemblage in the most loyal and satisfactory spirit. Even those Anglo-Indian journals which, as habitual supporters of the Opposition at home, were most hostile in their antagonism to the Titles Bill, have completely changed their tone, and now write in warmly approving

terms of the policy of giving to the announcement of your Majesty's Imperial Title in this country the utmost possible splendour and importance. I have thought it well to invite to Delhi, for this occasion, the editors of all the respectable newspapers in India, both the native and the English, and to entertain them in their separate camp. This step, which was never before taken in connection with any similar ceremonial, has had the happiest effect upon the tone of the whole Press. I have also invited all the Members of Council, with their wives and daughters, to be my *personal* guests during the week's festivities at Delhi, and I propose to invite the attendance of the French and Portuguese Governors.'

Writing to Lord Beaconsfield, on October 3, he says: 'I am afraid I may have seemed fussy or frivolous about the decorative details of the Delhi assemblage. . . . The decorative details of an Indian pageant are like those parts of an animal which are no use at all for butcher's meat, and are even unfit for scientific dissection, but from which augurs draw the omens that move armies and influence princes.'

Threatened famine in Bombay and Madras

All went well till late in the autumn, when news of a threatened famine in Bombay and Madras started hostile criticism on the proclamation scheme on the ground that it was 'spending money on pageants' when the people were starving. Lord Lytton, however, writes: 'I am strongly of opinion that the Delhi meeting has become more important than ever. In the first place, if we are on the eve of a war,[1] it is of vital importance to rouse the enthusiasm and secure the loyalty of all our great feudatories; and no such opportunity of doing this has ever occurred

[1] With Russia.

before, or is likely to occur again. . . . Again, if we are really threatened with a serious famine, necessitating additional imperial taxation and upsetting all our present financial calculations, the same opportunity will most advantageously enable the Government of India to enter into timely and personal consultation with the heads of local administrations on the subject of the financial policy required to meet the situation.'

Early in November 1876 the Viceroy, accompanied by Lady Lytton and his staff, left Simla for a tour round the frontier, to which reference has already been made in connection with the affairs of Khelat. After visiting Peshawur, Lahore, Multan, Bhawulpore, Jacobabad, and Kurrachee, they arrived at Delhi on December 23. The completest and most picturesque account of the great functions which then took place there is given by Lord Lytton in his letter to the Queen dated January 10, 1877.

*From Lord Lytton to the Queen*

'Delhi, Pattiala, Umballa, Aligurh, Agra;
December 23, 1876, to January 10, 1877.

'Madam,—I have so much to report to your Majesty, and so little time to write, that I should scarcely know where to begin this letter, if personal gratitude did not claim precedence even over public business. Yesterday was rendered eventful to Lady Lytton and myself by our receipt of the splendid and beautiful cup which your Majesty has deigned to confer upon our favoured baby boy.[1] It is impossible for me to express to your Majesty the pride we feel in being honoured by this exquisite gift from the

[1] Born on August 9, 1876, at Simla.

Letter to the Queen on Delhi Assemblage

beloved and revered hand of "Our Queen and gracious Lady," nor how greatly we admire the beauty and perfect taste of it as a work of art. This beautiful *tassa* will be an heirloom, cherished, I hope, for generations in a family to which your Majesty's godson, if his life be spared, will bequeath those sentiments of grateful and devoted loyalty which it is now his father's privilege to express on his behalf.

'The day before yesterday (December 23), I arrived, with Lady Lytton and all my staff, at Delhi, punctually to the hour which was fixed three months ago. I was received at the station by all the native chiefs and princes, and, before alighting from the train, I addressed to them a few words of welcome to Delhi, and thanks for the cordiality with which they had responded to the Viceroy's invitation. These were translated by Mr. Thornton, the Officiating Foreign Secretary; and then, after shaking hands with Kashmir, Sindiah, Holkar, the Nizam, Jeypore, and others, I immediately mounted my elephant, accompanied by Lady Lytton, our two little girls following us on another elephant. The procession through Delhi to the camp, which we only reached towards sunset, lasted upwards of three hours. It was a magnificent and most successful pageant. The Viceroy and staff were followed by the chief functionaries, civil and military, of your Majesty's Indian Government, mounted on elephants spendidly caparisoned. The streets were lined for many miles by the troops; those of the native princes being brigaded with those of your Majesty. The crowd along the whole way, behind the troops, was dense, and apparently enthusiastic; the windows, walls, and housetops being thronged with natives, who salaamed, and Europeans, who cheered as we

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passed along. . . . The infinite variety of the non-British native troops presented a most striking and peculiar appearance. Those who saw it will probably never again behold in one spot so vivid and various a display of strange arms, strange uniforms, and strange figures. . . . Your Majesty's Highlanders were the admiration of all who beheld them, and your Majesty may well be proud of these splendid troops. . . .

'My reception by the native princes at the station was most cordial. The Maharaja of Jeypore (who has lighted the Viceroy's camp with gas of his own manufacture) informed Sir John Strachey that India had never seen such a gathering as this, in which not only all the great native princes (many of whom have never met before), but also chiefs and envoys from Khelat, Burmah, Siam, and the remotest parts of the East, are assembled to do homage to your Majesty. He himself, he said, could hardly realise the difficulties which had been overcome, or the success which had been achieved, by this assemblage; and, indeed, up to the present moment there is, so far as I can ascertain, only one opinion on the part of Europeans, as well as natives, that our great undertaking has commenced most successfully with every promise of a no less successful conclusion. . . .

'I began this letter to your Majesty on the evening of my arrival at Delhi; but my time since then has been so incessantly occupied by other duties to your Majesty that I have only been able to continue it interruptedly at rare intervals of time. I will now endeavour to give your Majesty a short account of all that has happened up to date, without breaking the narrative by dating the interruptions in it.

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'Sunday and Christmas Day were days of rest. Divine Service was peformed in the Viceroy's camp by the Bishop of Madras and Archdeacon Baly: and special prayers were offered up for your Majesty in reference to the event we were about to celebrate. Our Christmas Day was saddened by a sudden and deeply felt bereavement. Captain Clayton of your Majesty's 9th Lancers, who was attached to my staff as an extra aide-de-camp at Delhi, broke his neck by a fall from his pony, whilst playing at polo, and expired in the course of the night. This excellent and most efficient officer was warmly beloved by all who knew him. His untimely death is a great loss to your Majesty's service and a lasting sorrow to his fellow-officers and many friends. To poor Lord William Beresford, who, from boyhood, had known and loved him as a brother, the shock and grief of it have been quite heartrending to witness. I have written to express my deep sympathy to the officers and men of his regiment. He has been buried in the camp at Delhi.

'On Tuesday (December 26) from 10 A.M. till past 7 P.M., I was, without a moment's intermission, occupied in receiving visits from native chiefs, and bestowing on those entitled to them the banners, medals, and other honours given by your Majesty. The durbar, which lasted all day and long after dark, was most successful. The order of the chiefs' visits to the Viceroy had been carefully arranged on a new principle, which completely obviated all difficulties and heartburnings about precedence, and each of them left my tent radiant with pleasure and surprise, and profuse in protestations of the most grateful and devoted loyalty. The medals are most artistic. They are universally admired. Their recipients seem to be exceedingly proud of them;

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and there is already a growing competition amongst both Europeans and natives to obtain even the silver ones; which, I may say, have been particularly useful, by enabling me, in your Majesty's name, to distinguish many minor services for which no other decoration, or honour of any kind, was available. The banners, which are splendidly embroidered by hand on the finest Chinese satins of every colour (the colours chosen for each being those most appropriate to the ruling prince to which it was given), have had a great effect. Their only fault, which I had not anticipated, is that the brass poles, which are elaborately worked, make them so heavy that it requires the united efforts of two stalwart Highlanders to carry one of them; and, consequently, the native chiefs who have received them will, in future processions, be obliged, I anticipate, to hoist them on the backs of elephants. This is what they did on the first occasion of their use in procession at the review I held on the day of my departure from Delhi. Your Majesty's portrait, which was placed over the Viceregal throne in the great durbar tent, was thought by all who saw it to be a very good copy, and an excellent likeness of your Majesty. The native chiefs examined it with special interest.

'On Wednesday, the 27th, I received visits from native chiefs, as before, from 10 A.M. till 1 P.M., and from 1½ P.M. to 7½ P.M., was passed in returning visits. I forgot to mention that on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings I gave great State dinners to the Governors of Bombay and Madras. Every subsequent evening of my stay at Delhi was similarly occupied by State banquets and receptions to the Lieutenant-Governors, the Commanders-in-Chief, and the Governor-General of Goa. To these dinners the Siamese, Nepaulese, and

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Yarkand ambassadors were invited, besides many distinguished natives. After dinner on Thursday, I held a levee, which lasted till one o'clock at night, and is said to have been attended by 2,500 persons—the largest, I believe, ever held by any Viceroy or Governor-General in India.'

After referring to the spontaneous expressions of loyal enthusiasm uttered by Sindiah at the great proclamation, and to the gratitude of Holkar for the promised rectification of the Khandeish boundary in his favour—a gratitude which took the practical form of an immediate subscription of 800*l.* to the famine expenses of the British Government—the letter goes on to say:

'The satisfactory and cordial assurances received from Kashmir are, perhaps, less important, because his loyalty was previously assured. But your Majesty will, perhaps, allow me to mention, in connection with the name of this prince, one little circumstance which appears to me very illustrative of the effect which the assemblage has had on him and others. In the first interviews which took place months ago between myself and Kashmir, and which resulted in my securing his assent to the appointment of a British officer at Gilgit, I noticed that, though perfectly courteous, he was extremely mistrustful of the British Government and of myself. He seemed to think that every word I had said to him must have a hidden meaning against which he was bound to be on his guard. During our negotiation he was careful to keep all his councillors round him, and he referred to them before answering any question I put to him: and, although he finally agreed to my proposals, he did so with obvious reluctance and suspicion, after taking a night to think them over. On the day

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following the Imperial assemblage, I had another private interview with Kashmir for the settlement of some further details. His whole manner and language on this last occasion were strikingly different. He spontaneously dismissed all his councillors, no one besides ourselves remaining in the room, except Mr. Thornton, my own Foreign Secretary, and Colonel Burne, and when I began to explain to him the reasons why I wished him to do certain things, he stopped me at once by saying, "It is unnecessary to explain all that. I am now convinced that you mean nothing that is not for the good of me and mine. Our interests are identical with those of the empire. Give me your orders and they shall be obeyed."

'I have already mentioned to your Majesty that one of the sons of Kashmir acted as my page at the assemblage.[1] I can truly affirm that all the native princes, great and small, with whom I was previously acquainted vied with each other in doing honour to the occasion, and I sincerely believe that this great gathering has also enabled me to establish the most cordial and confidential personal relations with a great many others whom I then met for the first time.

'Thursday, the 28th, was passed, like the preceding days, in receiving and returning the visits of the native princes, with a dinner and levee in the evening. This levee was so numerously attended, and the difficulty of making arrangements for the convenience and good order of so large a crowd under canvas, and in tents, to which the entries and modes of egress are necessarily somewhat small in size and limited in number, was so great that the crowd became almost

[1] The Viceroy's other page was a young midshipman in H.M.' Navy.

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unmanageable and, as many persons thus suffered from the crush, some Europeans who had come to Delhi resolved to find there a pretext for grumbling, being able to find no other, complained that proper arrangements had not been made for their comfort in connection with this levee. But really I know not what more could have been done than was done by the members of my staff, who, though their number had been largely increased for the occasion, had been working day and night for more than a week at the complicated arrangements necessary for the entertainment of the Viceroy's numerous guests, and the countless other details connected with the assemblage. For my own part I cannot express too warmly my admiration of the intelligence and foresight of all their arrangements, nor my gratitude for the cheerful devotion with which they have borne all their fatiguing labours; especially are my thanks due to Colonel Burne and Colonel Colley, who, during the last fortnight, cannot have slept more than two hours out of the forty-eight, and to whose indefatigable exertions the complete success of the assemblage is mainly due. If the vast number of persons collected together at Delhi, and all almost entirely under canvas, be fairly taken into consideration—a number including the highest executive officers of your Majesty's administration from every part of India, each with his own personal staff; all the members of my own Council, with their wives and families, who were entertained as the Viceroy's personal guests; all the representatives of the Press, native and European; upwards of 15,000 British troops, besides about 450 native princes and nobles, each with a following of from 2 to 500 attendants; the foreign ambassadors with their suites; the foreign consuls; a large number of

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the rudest and most unmanageable trans-frontier chieftains with their horses and camels, &c.; and then an incalculably large concourse of private persons attracted by curiosity from every corner of the country—I say if all this be fairly remembered, no candid person will, I think, deny that to bring together, lodge, and feed so vast a crowd without a single case of sickness, or a single accident due to defective arrangements, without a moment's confusion or an hour's failure in the provision of supplies, and then to have sent them all away satisfied and loud in their expressions of gratitude for the munificent hospitality with which they had been entertained (at an expenditure of public money scrupulously moderate), was an achievement highly creditable to all concerned in carrying it out. Sir Dinkur Rao (Sindiah's great Minister) said to one of my colleagues: "If any man would understand why it is that the English are, and must necessarily remain, the masters of India, he need only go up to the Flagstaff Tower, and look down upon this marvellous camp. Let him notice the method, the order, the cleanliness, the discipline, the perfection of its whole organisation, and he will recognise in it at once the epitome of every title to command and govern which one race can possess over others." This anecdote reminds me of another which may perhaps please your Majesty. Holkar said to me when I took leave of him: "India has been till now a vast heap of stones, some of them big, some of them small. Now the house is built, and from roof to basement each stone of it is in the right place."

'The Khan of Khelat and his wild Sirdars were, I think, the chief objects of curiosity and interest to our Europeans. . . On the Khan himself and all his

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Sirdars, the assemblage seems to have made an impression more profound even than I had anticipated. Less than a year ago they were all at war with each other, but they have left Delhi with mutual embraces, and a very salutary conviction that the Power they witnessed there is resolved that they shall henceforth keep the peace and not disturb its frontiers with their squabbles. The Khan asked to have a banner given to him. It was explained to His Highness that banners were only given to your Majesty's feudatories, and that he, being an independent prince, could not receive one without compromising his independence. He replied: "But I *am* a feudatory of the Empress, a feudatory quite as loyal and obedient as any other. I don't want to be an independent prince, and I do want to have my banner like all the rest. Pray let me have it."

'I anticipate an excellent effect by and by from the impressions which the yet wilder envoys and Sirdars of Chitral and Yassin will carry with them from Delhi, and propagate throughout that important part of our frontier where the very existence of the British Government has hitherto been almost unrealised, except as that of a very weak power, popularly supposed in Kafristan to be exceedingly afraid of Russia. Two Burmese noblemen, from the remotest part of Burmah, said to me: "The King of Burmah fancies he is the greatest prince upon earth. When we go back, we shall tell all his people that he is nobody. Never since the world began has there been in it such a power as we have witnessed here." These Burmese are writing a journal or memoir of their impressions and experiences at Delhi, of which they have promised me a copy. I have

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no doubt it will be very curious and amusing. Kashmir and some other native princes have expressed a wish to present your Majesty with an imperial crown of great value; but as each insists upon it that the crown shall be exclusively his own gift, I have discouraged an idea which, if carried out, would embarrass your Majesty with the gift of half a dozen different crowns, and probably provoke bitter heart-burnings amongst the donors. The Rajpootana Chiefs talk of erecting a marble statue of the Empress on the spot where the assemblage was held; and several native noblemen have already intimated to me their intention of building bridges, or other public works, and founding charities, to be called after your Majesty in commemoration of the event.

'But I must resume my narrative.

'Friday, the 29th, was passed in receiving native noblemen and decorating them, and in presenting banners to the Governors and Lieutenant-Governors, and medals to the Members of Council and others entitled to receive them. On Saturday, the 30th, I received the Khan of Khelat, paid some final return visits, had interviews with the Nizam, the ladies of the Gaekwar's family, the Begum of Bhopal, and the Princess of Tanjore. In the afternoon I held a long and very important Council, at which we settled various arrangements for the administration of the famine districts, about which we could not possibly have effected a satisfactory understanding with the local governments had it not been for the Imperial assemblage, which afforded us the means of taking the Governors of Madras and Bombay into personal conference. I think it fair to Sir Philip Wodehouse to inform your Majesty that he appears to me to be dealing with the scarcity in Bombay on sound prin-

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ciples and with great efficiency. But we have been obliged to send Sir Richard Temple to Madras to stop an alarming waste of money which would, in our opinion, if unchecked, eventually lead to a great waste of life in that Presidency. The Imperial assemblage, which has brought together all the principal Talukdars of Oudh, has also enabled me to complete, with their concurrence, arrangements for the early annexation of Oudh to the North-West Provinces. In fact, the great pageant at Delhi, so far from being a mere empty show, has enabled me to settle promptly and satisfactorily a great many important administrative questions.

'*Sunday*, the 31st.—The accumulation of famine and other business obliged me to work hard all the morning. But in the afternoon I was able to visit the beautiful Kutub (one of the wonders of Delhi), where the Duke of Buckingham, with his daughters (and Lord and Lady Downe, who are now staying with us, and whose visit is the greatest comfort to Lady Lytton and the greatest joy to us both), picnicked with us among the ruins.

Ceremony of Proclamation January 1, 1877

'Monday was the day of the assemblage, which I cannot attempt to describe to your Majesty. The weather was fortunately most fine. Everyone who witnessed it is unanimous in the opinion that it was the grandest spectacle and the most impressive they had ever seen. I have the honour to enclose herewith to your Majesty the text of my address to the princes. The afternoon was passed in the transaction of business; and at a State banquet during the evening it was my privilege to propose the health of your Majesty as Empress of India. I humbly ask permission to enclose a report of the words I used in discharging this honourable and most welcome duty.'

The letter, which does not attempt to describe the assemblage, may here be supplemented by a short account of the actual ceremony.

Description of Proclamation Ceremony

Three large pavilions had been specially erected for the occasion, at some distance outside, and overlooking an extensive plain to the north of the city of Delhi. The largest of these pavilions, which was semi-circular in form, about 800 feet long, facing the Viceregal throne, was occupied by the governors of Madras and Bombay, the ruling chiefs present at Delhi, with their principal attendants, and the various high officers of Government, all of whom were seated in such a manner that the native chiefs were intermingled with the high officials. The two other pavilions erected to the rear, right and left, of the Viceroy's throne were occupied by a large concourse of spectators, including the Governor-General of the Portuguese settlements in India, the Khan of Khelat, the Foreign Envoys and Consuls, and European and Native noblemen and gentlemen from all parts of India. The British troops, European and Native, were drawn up in a vast circle in the plain around.

The Viceroy arrived at the place of assemblage a little after noon, and was received with a royal salute from the troops assembled. On arriving at the grand entrance the Viceroy, accompanied by Lady Lytton and the members of his personal Staff, alighted from his carriage and, preceded by his Staff, advanced in procession to the daïs.

His Excellency, wearing the collar, badge, and robes of the Star of India, was received by the whole assembly standing, the massed bands drawn up close by playing the National Anthem until he had taken his seat on the daïs. The proclamation formally declaring Her Majesty the Queen to be Empress of India was then

Description of Proclamation Ceremony

read in English by the chief Herald and afterwards in Urdu by the Foreign Secretary. At its conclusion 101 salvos of artillery, intermingled with *feux de joie* from the assembled troops, were fired; the Royal Standard was hoisted, and the bands again played the National Anthem. After a brief pause the Viceroy then rose and addressed the assemblage. At the close of his address he read aloud the telegraphic message which the Queen-Empress had that day sent in her Royal and Imperial name.

At the conclusion of this address the whole assembly spontaneously rose and joined the troops in giving repeated cheers. Many of the chiefs present attempted to offer their congratulations, but were unable to make themselves heard. The Maharaja Sindiah was the first to rise. He said: 'Shah-in-Shah Pádsháh (Monarch of Monarchs), may God bless you! The Princes of India bless you and pray that your sovereignty and power may remain steadfast for ever.'

Commenting upon this spontaneous speech, Lord Lytton writes to Her Majesty: 'His words have a very special significance, which is recognised throughout India, though it is not apparent in the translation of them, and cannot be adequately rendered in English. The word used by Sindiah to express your Majesty's position in reference to himself and brother princes is a word which the princes of India have hitherto been careful to avoid using; for it signifies in the original the power of issuing absolute orders which must be obeyed. Coming, therefore, from the lips of Sindiah, on such an occasion, as the spokesman of all the native princes then and there assembled, it permanently and publicly fixes your Majesty's suzerain, and more than suzerain, power in India beyond all possibility of future question.'

The Viceroy's letter to Her Majesty continues:

Letter to the Queen on Delhi Assemblage

'Tuesday, the 2nd, was passed in receiving deputations and addresses, with a visit to the Imperial races, which were numerously attended by the native princes, one of whom (His Highness the Maharajah of Jodhpore) won the Empress Cup.

'Wednesday, the 3rd, was chiefly occupied by private interviews with Sir Salar Jung and various political officers. But I and Lady Lytton visited the soldiers' games, and attended the fireworks in the evening, at which the crowd was enormous. After the fireworks I gave a farewell dinner to the Governor-General of Goa, followed by a large reception. On Friday morning (the 5th) I reviewed all the British troops, the review being preceded by a march past of the troops of all the native princes at Delhi. The appearance of your Majesty's troops was really magnificent, and the whole review, as a spectacle, scarcely less imposing than the Imperial assemblage itself. Sindiah and Kashmir (your Majesty's two honorary Generals) were present, as also the Khan of Khelat and a large number of native princes. But the sun was so powerful that my Aide-de-camp, Lord William Beresford (who had been terribly shaken by the sad death of his friend, Captain Clayton), fainted in his saddle; and, indeed, I cannot feel too thankful that I was able to go through the fatigue of it without any worse *contretemps* than the loss of my gold medal, which fell off its riband into the dust as I was cantering home, and which the police have not yet been able to recover. At the close of the review I rode up to the lines, and addressed to the commanding officers a few words, of which I have also the honour to submit the report herewith to your Majesty.

Letter to the Queen on Delhi Assemblage

'I think I have forgotten to mention that the whole of the previous Thursday had been passed by me in receiving the farewell visits of the native princes. On Thursday, I also presided at a small conference of the native princes who are interested in the maintenance of the Mayo College. A report of our proceedings accompanies this letter. On Friday evening we left Delhi. On the following Saturday I reached Pattiala, and there installed the young Maharaja on the throne. He is only five years old, and I could not help pitying the poor child (a very promising little fellow), for so premature a commencement of the tedious ceremonials of a public life. The town was beautifully decorated, and the whole population seemed to have poured into the streets of it. Sunday we halted at Umballa, and, reaching Aligurh on Monday, the 8th, I there opened the Mohammedan College. I enclose a report of the proceedings. In a few days I shall be again at Calcutta, and able to commence with Sir John Strachey (who is an immense strength to our Council) our Budget for next March.

'It now only remains for me to solicit your Majesty's gracious acceptance of my deeply grateful thanks for the generous and valued encouragement with which I have been honoured by your Majesty in reference to the great undertaking which is happily over, and to crave your Majesty's indulgent pardon of this very imperfect account of the Imperial assemblage. To say the truth, I am beginning to feel sensible of the physical effects of the strain which has been upon me during the last fortnight, and I fear that I have failed to convey to your Majesty, by this long and unavoidably rambling letter, any adequate idea of the completeness of a success upon

which I would humbly ask permission to offer the congratulations of her devoted subject to our beloved and revered Queen-Empress. I hope, however, that descriptions of the event by pens less wearied, and more graphic, than my own will be written, and that proofs of its success, indirect but significant, will long continue to reach the throne of our Empress from all parts of her great empire.

Letter to the Queen on Delhi Assemblage

'There is but one other piece of news which I wish to convey to your Majesty before closing this long (and I fear tedious) letter. The Amir of Kabul has, at last, agreed to my proposals for an alliance, and has already sent two of his ministers to Peshawur, there to negotiate the details of it with my Envoy. . . .

'With heartfelt prayers for all that can prolong and increase the happiness of your Majesty's life and the glory and prosperity of your great reign,

'I have the honour to be, Madam, your Majesty's devoted and faithful humble servant,

(Signed) 'LYTTON.'

The new title was welcomed throughout India by the people as well as by the chiefs; its proclamation was received with every possible demonstration of loyalty. Throughout the whole of the British districts food and clothing were gratuitously distributed to thousands of poor, whilst many of the wealthy zemindars and municipalities gave liberal grants towards works of public utility. The durbars held simultaneously at the capitals of the native chiefs and princes were equally characterised by unmistakable evidences of good feeling.

Letters from public bodies and private individuals written in divers languages and dialects, poured in upon

Effect of Proclamation

Government. One chief wrote: 'The event of to-day is a red-letter day in the annals of modern India, of which not only we ourselves but our children and children's children may well be proud.' 'This is the third time,' wrote another, 'that India is going to be ruled by an Empress. The first was the widow of the Hindu King Agniborna; the second was the Rizia Begum, the daughter of the Mohammedan Emperor Altamash; the third is the Queen Victoria, the English Sovereign. But something greater has been achieved. Such a powerful Sovereign of so vast a territory never ruled India. This proclamation may consequently be considered superior to all its kind.'

Another address exclaimed: 'O Mother, O Beloved, O residing in the Palace of London, the descendants of the great Emperor of Delhi are burnt in the fire of your might. Surely to-day angels will sing your Majesty's glory in the heavenly regions where Yadhish Ra, the Son of Justice, who performed the great Rajasuya festival of Pandaras 3,000 years ago at Delhi, now resides.'

The 'Empress Day' is still kept in India as one of the great days of the year. Shops are shut, dinners are given, parades are held, salutes are fired.

Enormously exaggerated statements were made in the English papers as to the cost of the assemblage. In the Viceroy's opinion a great saving was accomplished through the policy of enlisting the hearty co-operation of the native princes, who all attended this great ceremony at their own expense. Most of the English troops came in the ordinary course of relief movements. The Viceroy entertained all the members of his own council at his personal expense, and the heads of local administrations similarly entertained their own guests.

In the opinion of the best judges in India, after some years' experience, the assumption by the Queen of the title of Empress has had political results of far-reaching importance. The supremacy of the British Government had of course been long admitted as a practical fact by all the native States of India, but in many cases their chiefs gave themselves, when opportunity offered and it seemed safe to do so, the airs of independent powers. Treaties, made perhaps nearly a hundred years before and still in force, might be quoted to show that the native prince, although not so strong, was equal in dignity and rightful position to the Viceroy. The Nizam, the Gaekwar, and the Viceroy had all the same salutes, than which to native imaginations there could be nothing more significant. The twenty-one guns ceased after the Delhi Assembly to be a sign of equality with the representative of the Sovereign. There can indeed be no doubt of the fact, now universally acknowledged in India, that the proclamation of the paramount superiority of the British Crown was an act of political wisdom and foresight which has not only strengthened our position throughout the vast territories of India proper, but has had no small effect also beyond the frontier of the Indian Empire.

# CHAPTER V

## PESHAWUR CONFERENCE AND FRONTIER NEGOTIATIONS OF 1877

Letter to Lord Salisbury. Sher Ali agrees to Peshawur Conference, December 18

THE news that Sher Ali had at last consented to enter into negotiations with the British Government by sending his Minister to meet our Envoy on the frontier reached the Viceroy on December 18, 1876. The members of the Amir's durbar, after lengthy and frequent consultation, had voted for the rejection of our proposals, but our agent had then urged the Amir to decide the matter himself. He agreed to do so, and after some hesitation intimated his intention of sending two of his principal ministers to discuss with our Envoy at Peshawur the conditions on which the permanent location of British officers on his frontier would be accepted.

This appeared to be a virtual, though reluctant, acceptance of the Viceroy's proposals, but the Amir did not reply to the Viceroy's letters, and took no notice of the invitation which had been sent him to the Imperial assemblage at Delhi.

Beginning of Peshawur Conference, Jan. 27

On January 27, 1877, the Kabul Envoy, Syud Noor Mahomed Shah, accompanied by the Mir Akhor Ahmed Khan, arrived at Peshawur, where Sir Lewis Pelly, to whom Dr. Bellew was attached as secretary, awaited him.

The first meeting between Sir Lewis Pelly and

Syud Noor Mahomed took place on January 30, the last interview was held on February 19. From the very beginning it was doubtful whether the envoy *was* authorised to accept the *sine-quâ-non* condition that British officers should reside on the frontier of Afghanistan to watch outside events. Ultimately, after much fencing, he rejected it. Sir Lewis Pelly then broke off the conference on the ground that if the basis on which alone any discussions were to take place was not accepted, he had no authority to open negotiations. He consented, however, to refer to the Viceroy what the Envoy had said, and to await His Excellency's reply.

In the course of the conference three successive meetings had been occupied with a long statement of the Amir's grievances. This statement repeated and confirmed the information previously given by our native agent, Atta Mahomed Khan, to the Viceroy at Simla. The Amir was represented as having lost confidence in the British Government, and amongst the reasons assigned for his mistrust the Envoy referred to the interference of the Viceroy on behalf of the Amir's imprisoned son, Yakub Khan, and the complimentary gifts and messages sent to the Mir of Wakhar without previously asking the Amir's permission to deal thus directly with one of his responsible governors. Both these causes of complaint occurred during the Viceroyalty of Lord Northbrook. The Envoy represented the Amir as having, before that time, had 'perfect confidence' in the British Government; having, however, refused to comply with the request that he should release his son Yakub, and restore him to Herat, Sher Ali considered the friendship between the two Governments was no longer intact. Lord Lytton's reply to Sir Lewis Pelly, conveyed in

a letter dated March 3, refers to these grievances as follows:

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'I sincerely regret to learn that the Amir has been for years secretly harbouring in his mind a sentiment of resentment towards the British Government, in consequence of three or four incidents in the conduct of its relations with His Highness; which caused him, at the time of their unnoticed occurrence, feelings of annoyance, only now for the first time made known to the Viceroy. I am confident that the causes of annoyance enumerated by the agent were not occasioned by any deliberate or intentional, or even conscious, disregard of the Amir's feelings on the part of the British Government. I have no doubt whatever that most of them might, and would, have been prevented by the presence of a discreet and intelligent British officer at Kabul, had such an officer been admitted to that unrestricted intercourse with the Government of His Highness which an experience tested by centuries, and gratefully acknowledged by every civilised State in the world, has proved to be the only practical means of maintaining amicable and mutually advantageous relations between neighbouring States. Such States must always have many interests in common, on which misunderstandings can hardly fail to arise if their Governments have no adequately confidential and authoritative medium of communication with each other.'

With regard to the question of admitting British officers to Afghanistan, the Envoy, in an informal conversation with Dr. Bellew, had stated that this subject, so constantly pressed upon the consideration of the Amir, had aroused his suspicions, and he was now 'convinced that to allow British officers to reside

in his country' would 'be to relinquish his own authority'; 'and the lasting disgrace thus brought on the Afghan people' would be 'attached to his name, and he would sooner perish than submit to this. The British nation is great and powerful, and the Afghan people cannot resist its power, but the people are self-willed and independent, and prize their honour above life.' In the subsequent interviews with Sir Lewis Pelly this view was repeated in different words again and again.

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Lord Lytton comments upon this:

'In the communications made by the Viceroy to His Highness from Simla in the month of October last the Amir was distinctly informed that unless he was prepared to recognise, in principle, the expediency of appointing British officers to reside in certain parts of the Afghan frontier, it would be useless to appoint Envoys for the negotiation of a Treaty entirely conditional upon that arrangement. His Highness was, at the same time, earnestly requested to consider very carefully the expediency of the proposal then made to him before committing himself to a decision. He did take many weeks to consider it; and when, after having thus deliberately considered it, he appointed his Minister to negotiate with you the best means of carrying it out, we were entitled to assume, as we naturally did assume, that the principle clearly explained by us to be the only possible basis of negotiation on our part had been duly and fully accepted by His Highness, and that the expediency of carrying it out was no longer open to discussion. The Envoy's present attempt to ignore the recognition of that principle, and to discuss the expediency of it as an open question, is a breach (which should be pointed out to him) of the under-

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standing on which we agreed to receive him as the Amir's representative in this negotiation.

'If, however, as would seem to be the case, the Amir, influenced by circumstances or considerations still unknown to us, has completely changed his mind since he entered upon the negotiation (which, in its present form, was originated by His Highness), the very last thing desired, or attempted, by the British Government would be to pin His Highness pedantically to the fulfilment of an understanding from which he now wishes to withdraw, or to the adoption of an arrangement which he does not regard with satisfaction.

'. . . . But in that case there is nothing left to negotiate about, and consequently no reason why the Afghan Minister should not immediately return to Kabul. You have rightly pointed this out to the Envoy; and I entirely approve the terms in which you have done so.'

Finally, the Envoy had contended that by Lord Mayo's written assurance at Umballa, and Lord Northbrook's verbal one at Simla, the British Government were already bound to protect the Amir, not only against foreign aggression, but also against internal revolt; that if this was admitted the Amir had nothing to gain by the re-statement of our obligation in any new form; that if this was denied then the British Government were chargeable with breach of faith. Lord Lytton emphatically repudiated this false position.

'The [Envoy's] argument would be perfectly sound if its premisses were true. But, unfortunately for the Amir, they are fundamentally erroneous. The only obligations ever contracted on behalf of each other by the British and Afghan Governments

are embodied in two treaties, of which the first was signed in 1855 and the second in 1857.

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'The Treaty of 1855 contains only three articles. The first stipulates that there shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the East India Company (to whose treaty rights and obligations the British Government has succeeded) and the Amir of Kabul, his heirs and successors. The second binds the British Government to respect the territories possessed by the Amir at the time when the Treaty was signed, that is to say in 1855, and not to interfere with them. The third article binds the Amir, his heirs and successors, not only to respect the territories of the British Government, but also to be the friend of its friends, and the enemy of its enemies. It is to be observed that this Treaty contains no corresponding obligation on the part of the British Government. The British Government is not without cause to complain that the Amir's conduct of late years has been inconsistent with the obligations contracted by the Government of His Highness under the terms of Article I. of this Treaty of 1855. Friendship between neighbouring States does not necessarily involve liabilities on the part of either State to furnish the other with material assistance; but it does necessarily involve the uninterrupted maintenance of friendly intercourse, and the fairly reciprocal recognition and discharge of all the customary duties of good neighbourhood.

'Now, not only are all the territories of the British Government freely open at all times to all the subjects of the Amir, but His Highness has received from the British Government repeated gifts of arms and of money, as well as a consistent moral

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support both at home and abroad. In return for these advantages to His Highness, what has the British Government received from the Amir? The territories of His Highness have been, and continue to be, churlishly closed to all the subjects of the British Government; with whom the Amir forbids his own subjects to hold any kind of friendly intercourse. Trade, traffic, travel,—all the customary bonds of union between neighbouring and friendly States, have been systematically discouraged and practically prohibited to British subjects in Afghanistan, by His Highness.

'The Amir has refused permission to the Envoy of the British Government, bound on a peaceful mission to another neighbouring State, to pass through his territory; and the determination of His Highness to withhold from the British Government all such natural good offices has been conveyed to it in terms scarcely consistent with courtesy, and certainly not consistent with friendship. Colonel Macdonald, a British subject, was barbarously murdered on the borders of the Amir's territory, by a person subject to the authority of the Amir, and for whose punishment His Highness was, therefore, responsible. But instead of cordially and efficiently co-operating to avenge this crime, the Amir has allowed the murderer to remain at large; and not only unmolested, but actually, I believe, in receipt of a pension from His Highness. I forbear to dwell upon the Amir's discourtesy in leaving wholly unanswered the proposal made to His Highness by the late Viceroy for the demarcation of his boundaries, in refusing to receive a complimentary mission from the present Viceroy, and in taking no notice whatever of the friendly invitation to Delhi which was subse-

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quently addressed to His Highness. More serious grounds of complaint exist in the fact that the closing of the Khyber Pass for the last two years appears to be mainly attributable to the hostile influence of the Amir; that His Highness has openly received at Kabul in an authoritative manner, and subsidised, the heads of frontier tribes, who are in the pay, and under the control, of the British Government; that he has, for some time past, been speaking and acting in such a manner as to indicate hostile designs upon territories beyond his own, and in the neighbourhood of the British frontier; and that even since the commencement of the present negotiations, he has been openly and actively endeavouring to excite against us the religious animosities of his own subjects, and of the neighbouring tribes, by misrepresenting the policy, and maligning the character, of the British Government.

'In short, the whole conduct and language of the Amir during the last four years has been one chronic infraction, or evasion, of the first Article of the Treaty of 1855. But this Treaty cannot be abrogated without the mutual consent of the two contracting parties to it; and, so long as it remains valid, the Amir is legally bound by it to co-operate with the British Government, if called upon to do so, in attacking its enemies and defending its friends; although the Treaty does not place the British Government under any reciprocal obligation on behalf of the Amir. His Highness, indeed, was so conscious of this fact when he met the Earl of Mayo at Umballa, that he then vehemently complained of the Treaty of 1855 as a "one-sided Treaty," and earnestly solicited from the British Government a new Treaty based upon the terms which the present

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Viceroy was prepared to offer the Amir in the month of October last.

'It is clear, therefore, that, under the terms of the Treaty of 1855, the British Government has contracted no liabilities whatever on behalf of the Amir. Moreover, although the British Government has assuredly no desire, or intention, to take advantage of the fact, it nevertheless *is* a fact, that the territories recognised by that Treaty as belonging to the Amir did not include Afghan Turkistan.

'I now turn to the consideration of the subsequent Treaty signed in 1857. This Treaty consists of thirteen Articles. The first of them recites the circumstances, arising out of the war then being waged between the British and Persian Governments, which induced the British Government to "agree, out of friendship, to give the Amir" of Kabul one lakh of rupees monthly during the continuation of that war, upon certain conditions. The second, third, fourth, and fifth Articles specify these conditions: whereby in return for the pecuniary assistance guaranteed to him by Article I, the Amir undertakes to maintain his army at a certain strength, to appoint and maintain a Vakeel at Peshawur, and to receive at Balkh, Kabul, Kandahar, and other places in Afghanistan, British officers with suitable establishments, whose duty shall be to insure the subsidy granted the Amir being devoted to the purpose for which it was given. The sixth Article stipulates that this subsidy shall cease at the conclusion of the war between England and Persia, or at any previous date preferred by the British Government. The seventh Article, to which the Envoy has made special reference, with an emphasis and iteration apparently superfluous, stipulates that,

on the cessation of the subsidy, the British officers shall be withdrawn from Afghanistan, but that the Amir shall continue, during the pleasure of the British Government, not only to receive at Kabul a permanent resident Vakeel appointed by the British Government, but also to appoint, and keep on behalf of the Afghan Government, a permanent resident Vakeel at Peshawur. The Envoy says that the Amir has scrupulously adhered to the terms of this seventh Article of the Treaty of 1857; but, so far as I am aware, His Highness has not for many years fulfilled the last-mentioned condition of the Article. All the remaining Articles of the Treaty refer exclusively either to the preceding stipulations, or else to special circumstances, considerations, and conditions, occasioned by, and ceasing with, the war between England and Persia, which led to the signature of the Treaty of 1857.

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'I should not have thought it worth while to say anything at all about this Treaty of 1857, if the Afghan Envoy had not laid such special stress upon its seventh Article; which is indeed the only one of all its articles that has reference to the conduct of general relations between the two Governments. It is obvious, however, that no treaty stipulation was required to oblige the British Government not to appoint a resident British officer at Kabul without the consent of the Amir. It is equally obvious that the seventh Article of the Treaty of 1857 was not intended to bind, and could not possibly bind, the Amir, never, under any circumstances, or at any future time, to assent to the appointment of a resident British officer at Kabul; for such a stipulation would have been clearly inconsistent with the freedom and dignity of the two contracting Powers.

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It is, therefore, certain that there is in the seventh Article of the Treaty of 1857 absolutely nothing whatever to preclude the British Government from pointing out, at any time, to the Amir the advantage, or propriety, of receiving a British officer as its permanent representative at Kabul; nor even from urging such an arrangement upon the consideration and adoption of His Highness, in any fair and friendly manner. But it so happens that the British Government has not proposed, and does not propose, or intend to propose, that arrangement. Consequently, the Envoy's remarks on the Treaty of 1857 are not to the point, and need not be further noticed.

'Now, these two Treaties, of 1855 and 1857, are the only ones which, up to the present moment, the British Government has ever contracted with the Government of Afghanistan; and it is as clear as anything can be 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 Amir, or the Amir's dynasty, against any enemy, or any danger, foreign or domestic.

'The Envoy, however, appears to be under an impression that obligations and liabilities of this kind, though not contracted under any Treaty, have been, none the less, incurred by the British Government through certain written and verbal assurances received by the Amir in 1869 from Lord Mayo, and by His Highness' Envoy in 1873 from Lord Northbrook. This impression is entirely erroneous; and I, therefore, proceed to examine in detail the facts and circumstances referred to by the Envoy in support of his assumption that the Amir of Kabul has, at the present moment, any claim upon

the unconditional support of the British Government.

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'The words, referred to by the Envoy as having been addressed by Lord Mayo to the Amir on March 31, 1869, were as follows:

'"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 attempts on the part of your rivals to disturb your position as Ruler of Kabul, and rekindle civil war; and it will further endeavour, from time to time, by such means as circumstances may require, to strengthen the Government of your Highness, to enable you to exercise with equity and with justice your rightful rule, and to transmit to your descendants all the dignities and honours of which you are the lawful possessor."

'Now, what were the circumstances in which these words were uttered? Only just established on a throne, to which he had fought his way through a long and bloody civil war, the Amir had come to Umballa, anxious for the support and protection of the British Government, and hopeful of obtaining from it a Treaty of Alliance. Disappointed in that hope, he eagerly besought the Viceroy to give him some written assurance of the good will and friendship of the British Government; which might serve to strengthen his position when he returned to Kabul, by convincing both his subjects and his rivals that his relations with that Government were of a thoroughly cordial and satisfactory character. In compliance with this request, the words above

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quoted were addressed to His Highness, by the Viceroy. Such were the circumstances in which they were uttered. What, then, were the meaning, purpose, and intention of their utterance? It is self-evident, in the first place, that whatever their meaning, and whatever their purpose, they were not intended to have the force of a Treaty; for the British Government had just declined the Amir's request for a Treaty of Alliance with it, and it could have had no possible reason for declining the Treaty, if it were prepared to accept on his behalf, in a form equally conclusive, all the liabilities of an alliance.

'The meaning and purpose of the Viceroy's assurance to the Amir in 1869, however, are clearly indicated and explained, beyond all possibility of question, by the context, as well as the circumstances, of His Excellency's address to His Highness at Umballa. In that paragraph of the address which immediately precedes the one I have quoted (because it is the one to which the Envoy has referred), the Viceroy expressed his confidence (a confidence founded on the assurance of His Highness) that the Amir was about "to create a firm and merciful administration," and "to promote the interests of commerce in every province of Afghanistan." In encouraging recognition of these excellent intentions (never fulfilled by the Amir) and of the closeness with which the bonds of friendship were then drawn between the British Government and His Highness (whose subsequent conduct has relaxed them), the Viceroy assured the Amir that the British Government would view with severe displeasure any attempt to disturb his throne. It is perfectly clear, however, that the Viceroy did not, and could not, thereby

commit the British Government to an unconditional protection of the Amir, or to any liabilities on behalf of His Highness which were not dependent on his future conduct towards the British Government and his own subjects. In short, the plain meaning of the Viceroy's statement was neither more nor less than an assurance that so long as the Amir 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 protect His Highness; using every legitimate endeavour to confirm his independence and consolidate his power.

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'In precisely the same spirit, and from the same point of view, the present Viceroy authorised the Kabul Agent to assure Sher Ali, last October, that if His Highness sincerely desired to deserve the friendship, and thereby secure the protection, of the British Government, they would be cordially and unreservedly accorded to him. But His Highness has evinced no such desire; and it is a puerile absurdity to assume that, because the British Government would have viewed with severe displeasure in 1869 any attempt to disturb the throne of a loyal and trusted ally, it is, therefore, bound in 1877 to protect, from dangers incurred regardless of its advice, the damaged power of a mistrustful and untrustworthy neighbour.

'You will tell the Envoy plainly that the British Government neither recognises, nor has ever recognised, any such obligation. British influence is so paramount throughout the East that the Government of India need rarely have recourse to arms in order to protect the friends who are faithful to it, or to punish those who are faithless. There

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is no neighbouring State which is not strengthened by the bestowal, and weakened by the withdrawal, of its friendship.

'The same observations apply to the statement made by Lord Northbrook in 1873 to the Amir's Envoy at Simla. The Envoy, on that occasion, represented and explained to the Viceroy the apprehensions and anxieties occasioned to the Amir by the recent advance of the Russian Power in Central Asia. His Highness fearing that, without the declared alliance and material support of the British Government, his independence might ere long be exposed to dangers with which he could not cope single-handed, had instructed his Envoy to solicit once more from the British Government a definite Treaty of Alliance on the basis of reciprocity, as well as material assistance in arms and money. Lord Northbrook declined to give the Amir the Treaty which His Highness asked for. And, therefore, as in the previous case at Umballa in 1869, it is clear that any subsequent verbal assurances given by Lord Northbrook to the Envoy were not intended to commit, and could not possibly commit, the British Government to any of those liabilities which it would have contracted on behalf of the Amir had the Viceroy felt able to comply with the request of His Highness by signing with him a Treaty of Alliance. The Envoy then endeavoured, as he has again endeavoured on the present occasion, to maintain that the British Government had already contracted such liabilities by virtue of assurances received in time past from Lord Lawrence and the Earl of Mayo. In reply to this assertion Lord Northbrook laid before the Envoy the whole of the correspondence which had passed between His Excellency's predecessors

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and the Amir, and requested him to point out in it a single word confirming or justifying the statement he had made, "that the British Government was bound to comply with every request preferred by the Amir." The Envoy, however, was unable to do so, and acknowledged the fact. Lord Northbrook then gave the Envoy the following assurance:—That in the event of any imminent aggression upon the territories of His Highness, "should the endeavours of the British Government to bring about an amicable settlement prove fruitless, the British Government were prepared to assure the Amir that they would afford him assistance in the shape of arms and money, and would also, in case of necessity, aid him with troops;" adding, however, that "the British Government held itself perfectly free to decide as to the occasion when such assistance should be rendered, and also as to its nature and extent: moreover, the assistance would be conditional upon the Amir himself abstaining from aggression, and on his unreserved acceptance of the advice of the British Government in regard to his external relations."

'It is sufficiently apparent that this personal assurance committed the British Government to no pledges which were not carefully guarded on every side by positive conditions with which the Amir has of late evinced no disposition to comply. On receipt of it the Envoy left Simla, apparently disappointed, and observing that the Amir was not likely to derive from it much comfort or support.

'I trust, therefore, that, on reflection, the Envoy will perceive and acknowledge that, in intimating to the Amir, last October, his willingness to grant him not only money, arms, and, should he require it, the services of British officers, but also a definite Treaty

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of Alliance, such as the Amir had twice vainly solicited from the British Government—once in 1869 and once again in 1873—the present Viceroy was offering His Highness altogether new, and very substantial, advantages. It appeared to the Viceroy that relations of mutual reserve and mistrust between neighbouring States so closely contiguous, and having in common so many interests, as Afghanistan and the Empire of India, were much to be deplored; more specially in the interests of the weaker State. An attentive study of the correspondence, to which the Envoy has referred, induced him to think that, in judging of the unfriendly attitude which, during the last few years, the Amir has thought fit to assume and maintain towards the British Government, it would be ungenerous not to make great allowances for the disappointment and mortification with which His Highness appeared to have regarded the reiterated failure of all his previous efforts to enter into closer relations with that Government; the extent to which the increasing weakness and isolation of his position might have aggravated this feeling; and the fact that the unfortunate imperfection of the hitherto existing means of communication between the two Governments afforded to neither of them any adequate opportunity of avoiding, or removing, those causes of irritation which might be solely attributable to their ignorance of each other's motives and interests. The Viceroy, therefore, came to the conclusion that, if the Amir still sincerely desired the open alliance and protection of the British Government, and was prepared to prove the sincerity of that desire by taking practical steps for placing his relations with us on a thoroughly cordial and satisfactory footing, the wishes of His Highness in regard to the Treaty of

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Alliance, and any other reasonable evidence of our confidence and friendship, should receive from us a similarly frank and cordial response. Her Majesty's Government concurred in that conclusion: and it was in all sincerity that the Viceroy authorised Atta Mahomed to say to the Amir—"If you really desire to secure and reciprocate our friendship, you shall have it without reserve, and find in us a firm and faithful ally."

'It would appear, however, from the whole tone of the Envoy's language to you, and from the statement so carefully made by His Excellency (at whose request it has been submitted to me), of the Amir's present views and sentiments, that His Highness now no longer desires our alliance and protection. The British Government does not press its alliance and protection upon those who neither seek nor appreciate them. This being the case, it only remains for the Viceroy to withdraw, at once, the offers made to the Amir in the month of October last; and, in so doing, to express his deep regret that these offers, and the spirit in which they were made, should have been so completely misunderstood, and so grossly and publicly misrepresented, by His Highness. Such unwarrantable misrepresentations of our recent policy, however, render it necessary to guard against similar misrepresentation of our present position. I must, therefore, request you to explain distinctly to the Envoy, and to place on record, in language not susceptible of misconstruction, that, in withdrawing from the Amir those offers of material assistance, in reply to which His Highness has instructed the Envoy to inform us that he neither requires, nor is disposed to accept, them, the British Government harbours no hostile designs against Afghanistan. This Govern-

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ment repudiates all liabilities on behalf of the Amir and his dynasty. It does not indeed withdraw from any obligations previously contracted by it; but it absolutely and emphatically denies that it has ever incurred any such obligations as those imputed to it by the Envoy of His Highness; and it, further, affirms that it will never, in any circumstances, undertake such obligations without adequate guarantees for the satisfactory conduct of the Amir. But, at the same time, it will scrupulously continue, as heretofore, to respect the Amir's independence and authority throughout those territories which, up to the present moment, it has recognised as being in the lawful possession of His Highness; and will duly abstain from interference therein, so long as the Amir, on his part, no less scrupulously abstains from every kind of interference with tribes or territories not his own. The Amir, therefore, so long as he remains faithful to those treaty stipulations which the Envoy has invoked on behalf of His Highness, and which the British Government fully recognises as still valid, and, therefore, binding upon the two contracting parties, need be under no apprehension whatever of any hostile action on the part of the British Government.

'It must also be placed on record, in a form to which authoritative and public appeal can be made, should the policy thus frankly explained be again misrepresented by the Kabul Durbar, that the British Government has no sort or kind of quarrel with the people of Afghanistan. It sincerely desires their permanent independence, prosperity, and peace. It has no conceivable object, and certainly no desire, to interfere in their domestic affairs. It will unreservedly respect their independence; and,

should they at any time be united in a national appeal to its assistance, it will doubtless be disposed, and prepared, to aid them in defending that independence from aggression. Meanwhile, the Afghan people may rest fully assured that so long as they are not excited by their ruler, or others, to acts of aggression upon the territories or friends of the British Government, no British soldier will ever be permitted to enter Afghanistan uninvited.[1]

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'With these explanations and assurances you are now authorised to close those conferences with the Afghan Envoy which, up to the present moment, you have conducted with so much judgment and ability. The felicitous combination of firmness and conciliation, of frankness and caution, which has characterised your language to the Envoy, and all your official intercourse with His Excellency, commands the cordial approval of the Viceroy, and will doubtless receive that of the Secretary of State. I do not consider that your exertions have been in vain. On the contrary, they have, in my opinion, been prolific in useful results. For four years the Government of India has been acting, or abstaining from action, in profound and perilous ignorance of the actual condition of its relations with the Amir of Kabul, and

The Viceroy approves of Sir Lewis Pelly's proceedings and authorises him to close the Conference

[1] Nor was this assurance forgotten in 1878. When the Amir insulted the British Government by receiving in full Durbar a Russian Mission, after having refused to receive a British one, the Government of India requested him equally to receive a British one, unless he wished us to consider him openly hostile. He refused to receive our Mission. We then considered he had committed an act of aggression against us, and massed our troops on the frontier. We did not, however, then fire a single shot or invade his territory till we had given him another chance of retracting this act of hostility. When, however we had warned him that we should consider his silence as a declaration of war on his part, and no answer came, there was no course left but to march into his country.

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the real sentiments and dispositions of His Highness. The information you have now obtained, partly in the course of negotiation, and partly by other means, and the completeness with which you have enabled the Government of India to verify that information, have torn aside the impenetrable veil which has so long concealed from us the increasing, and now apparently complete, extinction of British influence at Kabul. Your reports have also enabled the Government of India, whose policy in regard to Afghanistan has hitherto been based upon the merest guesswork, to form, for the first time since the Amir visited Umballa, a sufficiently definite and accurate notion, not only of the personal sentiments of His Highness, but also of his actual position, and the influences by which it is affected. I attach much value to these salutary revelations; and I am, my dear Sir Lewis,

'Yours faithfully,

(Signed) 'LYTTON.'

Death of Amir's Minister

Syud Noor Mahomed, who had been suffering from severe illness throughout the proceedings, died on March 26, before he had attempted any reply to this communication.

Lord Lytton's Minute, March 1877

'Thus,' wrote Lord Lytton, 'after months of fruitless discussion, endured with great patience by the British Government, this conference was closed by the death of the Kabul Envoy. The re-opening of the conference was rendered impossible by the declaration of that Envoy's surviving colleague that he had no powers authorising him to continue it.'

'While these protracted discussions with Syud Noor Mahomed were in progress, intelligence reached India from Kabul that the Amir was

straining every effort to increase his military force; that he was massing troops on various points of his frontier; that he was publicly exhorting all his subjects and neighbours to make immediate preparation for a religious war, apparently directed against his English rather than his Russian neighbours, both of whom he denounced, however, as the traditional enemies of Islam; that, on behalf of this Jehad, he was urgently soliciting the authoritative support of the Akhoond of Swat and the armed co-operation of the chiefs of Dir, Bajour, and other neighbouring Khanates; that he was, by means of bribes, promises, and menaces, endeavouring to bring those chiefs under personal allegiance to himself; that he was tampering with the tribes immediately on the frontier, and inciting them to acts of hostility against us; and that for the prosecution of these objects he was in correspondence with Mohammedan border chiefs openly subsidised by the Indian Government.'[1]

Viceroy's Minute on close of Peshawur Conference

The Viceroy commented upon this intelligence:

'The Amir throughout the whole course of the conference displayed, and subsequently continued to manifest without the slightest provocation, a marked hostility towards the British Government. Whilst his representative was carrying on friendly negotiations with the British Envoy at Peshawur, the Amir himself was publicly and falsely informing his subjects that the British Government had broken its engagements, and threatened the independence of his kingdom. On this mendacious pretext His Highness proclaimed a religious war against the British Government, and actively endeavoured, by every means in his power,

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

Viceroy's Minute on close of Peshawur Conference

not only to incite the border tribes against us, but also to tamper with the loyalty of our own subjects. All the letters addressed to him by the British Government calling for an explanation of this conduct have been left unanswered. Whilst continuing military preparations avowedly directed against this Government, His Highness has arbitrarily stopped the transmission of ordinary intelligence between Kabul and Peshawur. He has barbarously killed, mutilated, or expelled persons suspected by himself or his informants of holding even the most legitimate and inoffensive intercourse with the authorities or subjects of the British Government, and his whole conduct continues to be characterised by undisguised animosity. Such is the return made by the present Amir of Kabul for nine years of friendship and support on the part of the British Government. His authority over the outlying districts to the north of his present kingdom has been acknowledged by Russia solely in consequence of the firmness with which the British Government has, in his interests, insisted on that acknowledgment. From the commencement of our relations with the present Amir up to this moment no attempt has at any time been made by the British Government to disturb the peace of his dominions, no injury has ever been inflicted by this Government on himself or his subjects.

'In return for all this generosity and forbearance, the British Government has received from the Amir nothing but discourtesies, only rendered insignificant by his absolute impuissance. Our latest offers to protect his dominions and his dynasty, with much expense and trouble to ourselves but with no interference in his authority, have been answered by an

Viceroy's Minute on close of Peshawur Conference

attempt to stir up open hostility against us. We are even led to believe, from the best information at our command, that in order to injure the Government which has for years befriended and protected him, the Amir, in violation of his engagements with it, has not scrupled to enter into secret intrigues with a power which is now openly attacking Islam, and menacing the independence of his co-religionists and neighbours.

'The only pretext which has been put forward in justification of this conduct is that His Highness considers the recent stationing of a British garrison at Quettah detrimental to his own relations with the Khanate of Khelat and an indirect menace to himself.

'But it must here be observed that the hostile attitude assumed towards the British Government by the Amir of Kabul preceded, instead of following, the event in which His Highness now attempts to find a pretext for having assumed it.

'No such pretext, therefore, can be admitted by the British Government. For more than twenty years this Government has held direct relations with the Khanate of Khelat by virtue of Treaty stipulations which secure to it the right, not only of placing its own troops in the Khanate whenever it may have occasion to do so, but also of permanently excluding and opposing all interference on the part of any other Power in the affairs of the Khanate.

'The establishment of the present garrison at Quettah is in strict accordance with these pre-existing Treaty rights; as also with the terms of a new convention, recently signed, between the British Government and the Government of Khelat. It is, moreover, considered by the Khan and Sirdars of

Viceroy's Minute on close of Peshawur Conference

Khelat to be absolutely necessary for the peace of the Khanate, for the protection of trade, and for the security of our own frontier.

'The step thus imposed on us was obviously uncharacterised by any hostile design against the Amir, with whom we were at that moment conducting friendly negotiations, on a basis extremely advantageous to His Highness.

'Throughout the recent negotiations, as also throughout the whole of the previous connection between the two States since the accession of the present Amir of Kabul to the throne, the British Government has manifested the most scrupulous regard for the independence of Afghanistan and the most patient goodwill towards its ruler.

'The independence of Afghanistan is still desired by the British Government, although the British Government cannot undertake to secure it if the unfriendly and unwise conduct of the present Afghan ruler remains unchanged. The British Government, moreover, is still, as it has always been, sincerely animated by an unselfish interest in the general welfare of the Afghan population, and will view with great regret any suffering inflicted on that population by the errors of the present Amir.

'But if His Highness persists in the prosecution of his present faithless and unfriendly proceedings, all responsibility for the inevitable consequence of those proceedings must rest upon his own head. In any case the British Government now considers itself free to withdraw from the present Amir of Kabul, if further provoked by him, the support of its friendship and protection.

'The Government of India takes this opportunity of warning all the chiefs and tribes upon its frontier

to beware how they place themselves in the power of the Amir of Kabul, or become involved in the heavy responsibility which will be incurred by all who aid or abet that prince in any act of aggression on British territory or British subjects.

Viceroy's Minute on close of Peshawur Conference

'By listening to the false statements or trusting to the deceptive assurances of His Highness they will only prepare for themselves many future calamities. The British Government desires to cultivate their friendship and to respect and uphold their independence: but this it will be unable to do if they participate in hostile demonstrations against it.'

It subsequently became known to the Viceroy that Sher Ali would never have acquiesced in our proposals, even had he made a temporary pretence of accepting them, for he was already too far committed to the Russian Alliance. But there is little doubt that he was anxious to prolong the conference to the latest possible moment, whilst actively pushing forward his own warlike preparations.

He sent instructions to the surviving Envoy to prolong the conference by every means in his power, and despatched a fresh Envoy, who was reported to have authority to accept all the conditions of the British Government. In the opinion of the Viceroy, however, the concessions which it might have been well for the British Government to offer to the Amir had he shown any eagerness for our friendship could no longer be safely offered in the face of the situation revealed by Sir Lewis Pelly's investigations, and he decided that under these circumstances the prolongation of the conference could only lead to embarrassments and entanglements best avoided by the timely termination of it. On April 2 Sir Lewis Pelly left Peshawur.

Sir Lewis Pelly leaves Peshawur April 2

Native agent recalled

Our native agent at Kabul was also at this time withdrawn.

For purposes of information he had been proved worthless. He was nothing more than a tool in the hands of the Amir, and during the Peshawur Conference he was kept virtually as a prisoner at Kabul, all power of action being taken from him and all his movements carefully watched and controlled.

For long past the Government of India had been solely dependent for information on the reports of the agent at Kabul and those of the Commissioner of Peshawur, thus living in 'profound and perilous ignorance of actual facts and true causes' of all that went on in Kabul, while the Russian authorities were working most energetically and successfully against us.

The Indian Government acquires new sources of information

Now, however, other and more effective methods were inaugurated for obtaining authentic information. In establishing any new system of frontier organisation, the Viceroy had to contend with the opposition of all the old frontier officials, who objected to any radical changes, and looked with suspicion upon any system of diplomacy which required secrecy and dexterity. Amongst the Punjab frontier officers, there was one, however, who in the opinion of the Viceroy appeared to possess the requisite qualities of open-mindedness and intellectual quickness for carrying on such a work as the political management of the Peshawur frontier, this man being Captain Cavagnari. It was a cause of great satisfaction to Lord Lytton when, towards the end of May, this officer was moved to Peshawur to act as Deputy Commissioner. Before he actually started for Peshawur, he received a letter from the Viceroy promising him unreserved confidence on the subject of the

frontier policy he was anxious to inaugurate, and demanding from Captain Cavagnari in return a similar freedom of communication. The letter then goes on as follows:

Viceroy to Cavagnari, May 19

'As regards our present relations with Sher Ali, the one thing to bear constantly in mind is the importance of maintaining towards him an attitude of the most complete indifference and unbroken reserve.

'. . . . I do not intend to send Atta Mahomed[1] back to Kabul at all: and, if I eventually permit Bukhtiar Khan to return there in a private capacity, it will not be yet a while. In the meantime, therefore, it is expedient that through Mr. Christie, or by any and every other means in your power, you should obtain, from all available sources, information of what is going on in Kabul or elsewhere throughout Afghanistan, and keep the Government regularly and fully furnished with such information. Hitherto our intelligence from Afghanistan has been more constant, complete, and trustworthy since the withdrawal of the native agent than it was before. This is partly due to the Khelat telegraph and the communications opened by Sandeman with Kandahar. We get a fair amount of news, however, from Peshawur also. In working this Intelligence Department, I feel sure you will be careful to abstain from any word or sign which, if reported to the Amir, would convey to his mind the impression that we care three straws about what he may now do or not do, or that we have the least desire to re-open negotiations with him. I doubt if our present relations with His Highness will ever be satisfactory; but the only chance of improving them is to let him first thoroughly realise the diffi-

[1] Our native agent.

Viceroy to Cavagnari, May 19

culties of the position in which he has now placed himself. *Me judice*, the radical defect in the conduct of our past relations with Sher Ali is that the *tone* of it has never been in wholesome accordance with the realities of our relative positions—the weakness of his position and the strength of our own. Thus, induced by our own conduct to believe himself a political necessity to *us*, and consequently a great political catch to the *Russians*, he has naturally sought his personal advantage in playing his two great neighbours off against each other. A few months, possibly a few weeks, will, I think, suffice to show him that he is not strong enough to play this game successfully. I trust we shall never allow Afghanistan to fall into the hands of any other Power. But between Afghanistan and the present Amir there is a practical distinction. We can get on without Sher Ali; he cannot get on without us. Ere long he must either go to shipwreck altogether, or else return to his old moorings on the Peshawur side in a temper chastened by sharp experience. In the former case our hands will be completely free to deal promptly with the new situation which will then arise. In the latter case we shall be able to replace both the Amir and ourselves in what is our true, and should always be our permanent, relative position towards each other. The wrecks come to the shore: the shore does not go to the wrecks.

'Yours, dear Captain Cavagnari, very faithfully,

(Signed) 'LYTTON.'

A mission from the Sultan of Turkey was sent this year to the Mohammedans of India and Afghanistan, and it was thought that his influence over the Amir might induce the latter once more to come to a better

understanding with the British Government. But it had no such effect. The mission was received by the Amir with great pomp and an obvious desire to impress the Envoy by a strong display of military power. Reports first reached the Viceroy to the effect that the Amir seemed really anxious to avail himself of this opportunity of escape from his present difficulties by renewing friendly relations with the Indian Government and rupture with the Russians. This rumour was so far confirmed by the fact that the troops intended for the jehad against us had been removed from our frontier to Maimema. Then, again, the Amir reverted to his old policy of trying to gain time. He was indisposed, and could not grant the Turkish Envoy an interview for fifteen days. When the interview took place the Envoy found His Highness very badly disposed towards the English and his sympathies strongly Russian. Russian influence he found predominant at Kabul, where the Russian Government had established an active agency supplied from different parts of Khokand. The Turkish Envoy was a 'pious Mulla without guile,' and in all his interviews with Sher Ali the Amir had the best of the argument. At all events the Envoy departed having totally failed to establish better relations between the Governments of India and Afghanistan.

All these negotiations had broken down upon the essential point, which was indeed the keystone defined by Lord Salisbury's despatch of February 1876. Her Majesty's Government had authorised Lord Lytton to conclude a treaty with the Amir, guaranteeing the integrity of his dominions, but stipulating that for the effective performance of this guarantee, the Amir should permit British agents to

have undisputed access to frontier positions upon the North-West border of Afghanistan. This was, therefore, necessarily insisted upon in the negotiations of 1877, as the preliminary basis, and when the Afghan Envoy declined to admit it, the proceedings inevitably came to an end. The rupture of these negotiations undoubtedly widened the breach between the Amir and the Indian Government. Sher Ali began now more openly to listen to friendly overtures from beyond the Oxus, while the Viceroy of India, recognising that the Amir was completely estranged, regarded him henceforth rather as a dangerous and untrustworthy neighbour than as a ruler whose power it would be well to strengthen, and whose dominions should be guaranteed.

The importance he attached to the newly acquired position at Quettah and his negotiations with the Maharaja of Kashmir concerning the tribes of Chitral and Yassin were prompted by the idea of widening the influence of the British power over the frontier tribes, and of loosening that of the Amir beyond the boundary of his own little kingdom. From this point of view, also, he discusses in a correspondence with Cavagnari the advisability of openly befriending some of the more important of the tribes whose territory lay between that of the Amir of Kabul and the North-West Frontier of India.

Captain Cavagnari heartily agreed that the independence of these tribes of the Amir of Afghanistan was a fact which had not been sufficiently taken into account by the British Government, but at the same time he warned the Viceroy that any active steps on the part of the British Government to secure their independence by the gift of arms or money would at once be resented by the Amir as

an act offensive towards him, and should not, therefore, be resorted to while there was still any chance of patching up differences with Sher Ali.

Viceroy to Cavagnari, June 9

The Viceroy in his reply gives his reasons why, in his opinion, a complete change of policy with regard to these intermediate tribes has become necessary. 'Our original Afghan policy,' he wrote, 'was to regard these tribes as the political property of the Amir of Kabul, with a view to making him responsible for the control of them. I think that policy was a very reasonable one; for it is always convenient to simplify your external relations as much as possible, and unify the authority you have to deal with on your border, whenever that can be practically done. But, owing to various causes, the policy has failed, and failed so irremediably that we cannot now set it on its legs again. The Amir has never been able to exercise authority over these intervening tribes in the sense contemplated by those who laid down the lines of the old policy; what influence he does exercise over them is distinctly prejudicial and permanently inconvenient to us; and meanwhile we, on our part, have never been able to exercise authority or influence over their Amir. Practically, therefore, the result is that already Russian influence can approach the Amir through an open door, which it is not even in his power to close; while we can only get at him across a hedge of thorns. . . . Our relations with the Amir of Kabul, instead of being to us a source of increasing security, are a cause of incessant anxiety. It is not, and cannot be, in our interests to promote the consolidation of a border power whose friendship we have no means of securing, and whose enmity we cannot punish save by a war in which success would not be free from embarrassment.

Viceroy to Cavagnari, June 9

Therefore I conceive that it is rather the gradual disintegration and weakening, than the consolidation and the establishment, of the Afghan power at which we must now begin to aim.' To Cavagnari's objection that the conclusion of satisfactory relations between the British Government and the independent frontier chiefs would render impossible a reconciliation with the Amir, the Viceroy's reply was this: 'Sher Ali has irrevocably slipped out of our hands; and it is therefore inadvisable to neglect any opportunity of strengthening or improving our position by means independent of his goodwill for fear that by so doing we should provoke his resentment.' Cavagnari had further objected that any such relations established with border chiefs would be as distasteful to Sher Ali's successors as to himself. To this again the Viceroy replied that if the aim of British policy was not to consolidate but to disintegrate the Kabul power, this did not matter. 'We can never satisfy their national ambition, because many of its natural objects are not compatible with our own interests. They will never greatly value such help as we are able and willing to give them, and the more confidently they can reckon on it the less they will appreciate it. But they will always be more or less influenced by our practical power of hurting them; and it is this which we should now endeavour to develop and confirm.'

The system of government and organisation of the North-West Frontier of India has been the subject of discussion and controversy now for generations.

Writing in the spring of 1877, Lord Lytton comments upon the 'overwhelming concurrence of opinion' then existing on three points. Firstly 'that our frontier administration was in need of adjustment,'

secondly that the Government of Sindh should be severed from that of Bombay, and thirdly that 'the line of demarcation between the Sindh or lower frontier and the Punjab or upper frontier should be readjusted according to the distribution of the races on the border; so that the Belooch tribes [might] all come within one district and administration, and the Pathan tribes within the other.'

In a minute dated April 22, 1877, Lord Lytton examined the various propositions of reform which were then before the Government of India, and sketched in outline a scheme which embodied his own views as to the best policy to be pursued.

**Viceroy's Minute on Frontier re-organisation**

He was in favour of forming a new frontier district beyond the Indus, and separate from Sindh and the Punjab. This district should be placed under a Chief Commissioner or Governor-General's agent, having the management directly under the Government of India of all frontier business and trans-frontier relations. 'The Viceroy would, by means of this arrangement, command the services of his own specially selected agent, in whose hands the threads of all our border politics and tribal relations would be concentrated. The time of such an agent could be devoted almost entirely to purely frontier duties; and he would be better able than any Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab can possibly be to visit with adequate frequency, freedom of mind, and singleness of interest all parts of the frontier; thus making himself personally and thoroughly familiar with the social facts, individual characters, and local sentiments which claim incessant and concentrated attention in the successful administration of border politics. The political and administrative conduct of the frontier would be in the same hands and pass

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through the same channels. All division of responsibility and all antagonism of schools and systems would thus be eliminated.'

Objections to such a system were expressed on the grounds, *first*, that these frontier districts naturally formed an integral part of the Punjab, and should not, therefore, be separated from it; *secondly*, that their internal administration would suffer by separation; *thirdly*, that our frontier relations are best carried on through the Punjab Government.

With regard to the first of these objections Lord Lytton's inquiries led him to an exactly opposite conclusion. 'The frontier districts,' he writes, 'are separated from the Punjab by almost every possible kind of distinction. They are separated geographically, historically, by race, by institutions, and by customs. The Indus, for a great part of its course, forms a natural and little traversed boundary between two essentially distinct territories. The trans-Indus districts were only conquered and annexed to the Sikh kingdom late in the reign of Runjeet Singh; and the tribal system prevalent throughout the greater portion of them differs widely from the institutions of the cis-Indus population.'

The second objection, namely, that the internal administration of these frontier districts would suffer by their separation from the Punjab, came chiefly from those officers directly connected with the Government of the Punjab. While acknowledging that such men were undoubtedly 'the best qualified judges on certain points,' Lord Lytton pointed out that 'they were yet hardly in a position to form the soundest or most impartial opinion' on the general merits of an arrangement involving 'some reduction in the scope and power' of the particular Govern-

ment with whose 'achievements and traditions they were justly proud to be associated.'

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The last objection was that our frontier relations were best carried on through the Punjab Government. With regard to this Lord Lytton wrote: 'So long as our relations with the trans-frontier States are carried on by an officer of comparatively subordinate position, there may be reasons why he should communicate through the local Government rather than directly with the Government of India. But if the conduct of these relations be transferred to an officer whose official rank is little below that of the Lieutenant-Governor himself, it is in that case difficult to imagine what advantage could be gained by reserving to the Punjab Government any share in the conduct of them. All unnecessary links in an administrative chain admittedly weaken the strength of it. The frontier officer has all the local knowledge necessary to enable him to form and submit an opinion, or to frame a line of policy for the consideration of the Government of India. The Government of India reviews the information and opinions thus submitted to it with a knowledge of British and Imperial interests, as also of the military and financial conditions of India, wider and more accurate than that of any local administration. But what new light can the Punjab Government throw on the matter? It has not the local knowledge of the Chief Commissioner on the spot, and it has no knowledge of Imperial policy and political conditions which the Commissioner does not equally possess.'

With regard to the military portion of the Viceroy's scheme it was his intention to amalgamate the Punjab Frontier Force and the Sindh Frontier Force, placing the whole under the orders of the

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Commander-in-Chief. 'The time had come,' he thought, 'for the military force to take its proper place with the rest of the troops under the immediate orders of the Commander-in-Chief; and for the civil Government to rely more directly under ordinary circumstances on its own force—the police. The intermixture of commands which has been so often pointed out as the great blot in our frontier military system would thus cease; and Peshawur, instead of being a separate command interposed between and interrupting the continuity of the frontier chain of ports, would take its national position as the military headquarters of the northern division.

'Though amalgamated and placed under the Commissioner-in-Chief the force should still be localised and retain its character of a frontier force; that is to say, the regiments should serve only within the frontier military districts, though interchangeable within these.

'For the immediate security of the frontier against petty raids, &c., it is essential that it should possess a picked and most efficient police force, commanded by picked officers. For the Sindh frontier the money saved by the reduction of one regiment of Sindh horse might suffice to increase and improve the police force; the existing Belooch Guides forming part of the police organisation. . . . I am hopeful that the force thus formed may eventually become an admirable school for frontier work, and a promising and popular field of distinction for young men of energy and character.'

This Minute on frontier organisation closes with some general remarks on frontier administration, which are quoted in full:

'I think it desirable that I should take this

Viceroy's Minute on Frontier reorganisation General principles of Frontier administration

opportunity of indicating broadly the views I personally hold regarding frontier administration. Very broad the sketch must necessarily be, when so much depends on conditions constantly changing; on the prejudices and passions of races with whom we are as yet but imperfectly acquainted; and on the individual judgment and special qualifications of the officers on whom so much depends. If, in the views I am about to express, I have the concurrence of our frontier officers, and they claim to have been endeavouring to act on the lines here set forth, I shall feel myself strengthened and encouraged by their support. If, on the other hand, they differ on some points from the conclusions I have arrived at, I can only say that these conclusions are not "evolved from my inner consciousness," and that I claim no supernatural insight into frontier politics. My views on this subject have been derived from long and careful study of masses of correspondence, reports, minutes, &c., containing the opinions of the most competent judges, both actors and spectators. By the recorded experience of others I have endeavoured to test and correct all *à priori* impressions of my own; and the conclusions thus gradually matured are confirmed by such knowledge of the facts they refer to as I have been able to acquire from a year's tenure of office, during which several important frontier questions have forced themselves prominently on my notice. It is well to bear in mind that in policy, as in other games of skill, the observant spectator is often a better judge than the player absorbed in the chances of the game.

'In the first place, then, I think it should be our aim to cultivate more direct and frequent intercourse than at present exists between ourselves and the

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tribes on our borders. I have already had occasion to observe more than once, what I cannot too often repeat in reference to this subject, that it is to the effect of the straightforward, upright, and disinterested action of English gentlemen, and to the influence which higher mental power and culture never fail to exert over those who are brought much in contact with them, rather than to superiority in fighting power and appliances, that I attribute British supremacy in India, as well as the exceptional success of British rule in all quarters of the globe. If personal character and influence be the powerful engines I believe them to be, it is desirable that their force should be exercised as constantly and directly as possible. For this, among other reasons, I propose the appointment of a Chief Commissioner at Peshawur, invested with exceptionally high powers, who can represent to the native mind more directly and personally than either the Lieutenant-Governor at Lahore, or the still more distant Viceroy at Calcutta, the embodied power and dignity of the British Government. For this reason also I propose to increase the administrative staff of divisions and districts; so that the Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners, relieved of much purely routine work, may have more time for visiting, and becoming personally acquainted with, their troublesome, but not hopelessly unmanageable, neighbours. I have before me now a Minute by Major James, formerly Commissioner of Peshawur; in which, as the result of thirteen years' frontier experience, he expresses himself most strongly as to the absolute impossibility of combining a proper intercourse with the border tribes with the execution of his ordinary civil duties. The then Lieutenant-Governor, and Lord Lawrence,

hinted, indeed, that this incompatibility of functions was Major James's own fault; yet from all quarters I hear Major James spoken of as one of the ablest and most active administrators the frontier has known, and one who, but for his untimely death, had a brilliant career before him.

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'Again, for the reasons given above, I think that the employment of Arbabs, or middlemen, should be discontinued as much as possible. I do not myself believe that it strengthens our hold even upon the small class we thus employ. For every man gratified by employment, a host of jealousies are raised against him and ourselves. . . . I admit, however, that there are many occasions on which the services of Arbabs have been, and may again be, most valuable to us, especially in opening communication with frontier tribes; but I think that whenever their services can be dispensed with, and direct communication opened, or maintained, by our own authorities, this should be done. Even if we could always depend on the absolute loyalty of Arbabs, these men cannot convey to the Native the same clear idea of our views and character that he would gain by personal intercourse with British officers.

'For the same reasons, I would be inclined to relax somewhat the restrictions now placed on district officers corresponding with Chiefs beyond the border, and on officers crossing the border. I am aware that this is a matter which will require very careful and delicate handling; and that any relaxation of the present restrictions may be attended with considerable risk. But it seems to me that, in our anxiety to avoid present risk and complications, we have somewhat sacrificed future influence and security. I think there is no one who considers our present

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relations with the trans-frontier tribes to be altogether satisfactory. I believe that our North-Western Frontier presents at this moment a spectacle unique in the world: at least, I know of no other spot where, after twenty-five years of peaceful occupation, a great civilised Power has obtained so little influence over its semi-savage neighbours, and acquired so little knowledge of them, that the country within a day's ride of its most important garrison, is an absolute *terra incognita*; and that there is absolutely no security for British life a mile or two beyond our border. I can see no force in the oft-repeated argument that the Sikh and other kingdoms were no more successful than ourselves in their intercourse with these hill tribes; unless, indeed, it be assumed that English civilisation and rule are no better than those of a Sikh or Persian kingdom; that an English officer represents no higher type of character than the servant of an eastern king; and that our power and military resources and appliances are not immeasurably superior to those of the kingdoms which were crushed by a mere fraction of the force now at our command.

'Next, as regards our general system of frontier defence, and the punishment of offences committed by the independent tribes; I think, as already stated, that the time has come when the military force should pass under the Commander-in-Chief, losing somewhat of its police character, while the civil power should be more directly responsible for the protection of life and property. I propose, therefore, to increase somewhat the police force, giving it as good an organisation as possible, and placing it directly under the district officers. The local militia also should be under the district officers;

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and ordinarily these civil forces should be sufficient to meet and punish any attempts from over the border. With a picked police force, composed of men of the same stamp, and as inured to hill work as the tribes whom they have to act against, but better armed, organised, and disciplined, under picked officers, and with a proper system of espionage and intelligence, I see no reason why the security of the frontier should not be maintained, in ordinary times, without the assistance of troops. But when once the troops are called out, then the control of all armed forces, military, police, or militia, should pass into the hands of the officer commanding the troops; and he alone, acting of course in concert and communication with the civil authorities, should be responsible for the protection of the frontier.

'I have already, on several occasions, expressed my strong disapproval of the system of small punitive military expeditions; and I have twice, within my short tenure of office, refused to sanction them when they have been recommended. I do not for a moment suppose that these turbulent and savage tribes can be managed without occasional displays of power, and severe punishment; but I object to this particular form of punishment. I object to it because it perpetuates a system of semi-barbarous reprisal, and because we lower ourselves to the ideas of right and might common to our barbarous neighbours, rather than endeavour to raise them to our own ideas;—because it seldom really touches the guilty, and generally falls most heavily on the innocent; because its natural tendency is to perpetuate animosity rather than lead up to good relations; because, as a rule, it leaves no permanent mark, and

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the tribes assailed by us can point triumphantly to our having evacuated their country after all; because there can be no more trying fighting for our own troops than that which obliges them ultimately to retire before an enemy increasing in strength and boldness: and it appears from the records of these expeditions, which are not always successes even in the most limited sense, that the losses suffered by ourselves often exceed the losses we inflict. Finally, I object to this system because I think the confidence of the hill tribes and their warlike spirit are quite as likely to be raised as lowered by contests in which they generally fire the last shot at a retreating foe. I am aware that the expeditions I thus deprecate are defended by a large number of our most experienced frontier administrators, on the grounds, so far as I understand them—1st, that they are the only means of dealing with barbarous races; and, 2nd, that their success has been proved by results. With regard to the first argument, I cannot find that any other system has ever been tried with sufficient persistence to give it a chance; and, with regard to the second, I cannot at all admit the results that have been obtained, after twenty five years' frontier administration, as evidence of successful dealings with these tribes, seeing that European life is as insecure as ever beyond our immediate border; that we have recently been exposed to a series of successful raids and outrages from one tribe; and that in my short tenure of office I have twice had to consider the necessity of military operations against offending sections. I maintain that, under ordinary circumstances, the police should be able to cope with offences committed within our border, and, if necessary, follow up and inflict punishment beyond it.

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I also maintain that when troops are used, the expeditions should be on a considerable scale, and productive of *permanent* results. At any rate, under no circumstances should the troops be withdrawn until all opposition has absolutely ceased: they should never be required to turn their backs to an enemy who is still firing at them. And I think these expeditions, in which, while doing little to put our relations permanently on a better footing, we injure a whole tribe for the vicarious punishment of an individual, are particularly inapplicable where (as is so repeatedly and strongly represented to us by the Punjab authorities) there really is little or no tribal responsibility or control. In the Punjab Report of October 1876 it is pointed out that the Belooch system of tribal responsibility cannot be applied to the Pathan tribes, because "every tribe is divided and sub-divided into numerous clans, each independent of the others, and yielding but small obedience to its own petty headmen." These tribes, it is stated, "only unite against a common enemy. Control exercised over such tribes through their chiefs would be impossible, for the chiefs do not exist." Yet it is to these very tribes that the system is applied of burning certain villages because other members of the tribe have committed outrages.

'In dealing with barbarous tribes, our object should be either to support and enforce tribal responsibility to the utmost wherever it already exists, or to reduce tribal cohesion to a minimum where no recognised authority can be found and used. The worst system of all is that which, while it gives us none of the advantages of tribal responsibility, yet unites the tribe against us when we seek to exact reparation for injuries inflicted. If, therefore, as we

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are repeatedly assured by the Punjab authorities, the heads of these tribes cannot be held answerable for the actions of individuals, it should be an object to trace the offence, and bring home the punishment to the individual and his immediate abettors, rather than to punish the tribe itself for the acts of the one or more of its members.

'It is hardly necessary to say that in reference to this, as to other points which I have indicated, I am fully alive to the difficulties of execution; but I think it none the less important to lay down general lines for guidance in our action.

'The last point to which I attach special importance, is the gradual disarmament of the population immediately within our frontier. The old reasons for allowing and encouraging them to carry arms, namely, that they were required to participate actively in the defence of the frontier, have almost disappeared; and, in any case, I would entrust the protection of the frontier against violence to the police and military, rather than to the inhabitants themselves. One of the first steps towards civilisation and social progress is the separation of the military from the agricultural and trading classes; and the sooner our subjects can be taught to confine themselves to peaceful pursuits, looking to the authorities for protection and redress instead of taking the law into their own hands, the better it will be for all concerned. Such a measure would require care and time for its execution; but whenever the inhabitants of a village or district have shown themselves troublesome, or specially quarrelsome, or slow to render assistance when called upon, the opportunity should be taken to deprive them of their arms. Meanwhile all who do carry arms

should be to some extent organised; and the carrying of arms be clearly understood to carry with it certain responsibilities. The number of able-bodied men carrying arms, and the nature of their arms, should, as far as possible, be registered, and all armed villages required to furnish assistance to the police or civil power, or supply escorts, watchmen, &c., in proportion to their armament.

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'These are my general views on the subject of border policy. The re-organisation of the frontier districts, which is here proposed, will doubtless afford great facilities and advantages for giving practical effect to the principles on which I am anxious to see the management of frontier affairs conducted. But I need scarcely point out that the necessity for a speedy and complete re-organisation of the present system of Frontier Government is entirely independent of any administrative theories, or political principles, peculiar to myself. This measure is absolutely and urgently requisite for the efficient execution of the policy of the Government of India, whatever that policy may be, or howsoever that Government may be composed now, or hereafter.

LYTTON.

'NAINI TAL: *April* 22, 1877.'

This Minute was written in April of 1877. In the autumn of this year the Viceroy authorised a small expedition against the Jowaki tribes who had perpetrated incessant raids upon the Peshawur border. In authorising a punitive expedition against them, however, the Viceroy endeavoured to carry out as far as possible the principles which he had laid down in the Minute. His difficulties were great,

owing to the multiplicity of authorities with whom he had to deal, and the first expedition was a failure. The Viceroy had explicitly urged a 'night surprise.' Nevertheless it was carried out in broad daylight.

Viceroy to Sec. of State, October 4

'The tribes were thus made aware in good time of all that our authorities flattered themselves they were keeping secret; the expedition was ludicrously ineffectual, and has of course done more harm than good.'

In despair of otherwise coming to a satisfactory understanding with the frontier authorities, the Viceroy sent his military secretary, Colonel Colley, unofficially to Peshawur to ascertain the real facts of the situation there and to assist the Viceroy in arriving at some practical decision on the various proposals which had been submitted to him. The principles which were laid down at this conference of officers were as follows:

Viceroy to Sec. of State, November 23

'1st. To avoid as far as possible operations necessitating the ultimate retirement of the British troops under pursuit and fire of the enemy.

2nd. To hold all positions once taken until the absolute submission of the tribe has been secured.

3rd. To make the loss and suffering fall as heavily as possible on the enemy's fighting men, and as lightly as possible on the non-combatants.'

Under the new system advocated by the Viceroy operations were begun against the Jowaki tribes under General Keyes, who advanced into their country on November 9, with a force about 2,000 strong. Pains were taken to isolate this tribe, which

had caused the disturbances, from the surrounding and neighbour tribes, thus reducing the strength of the enemy to be quelled to some 1,200 or 1,500 men. This was successfully accomplished. The other tribes refused the appeal for help from the Jowakis, and continued to trade actively and peacefully in British territory.

To Lord Salisbury, November 23

On November 23 the Viceroy wrote to Lord Salisbury: 'I have made every effort to keep the present operations (which in some form or other were absolutely unavoidable) within the narrowest possible bounds; first, by confining them to the Jowakis and taking every security for the isolation of that tribe before we attacked it; secondly, by rejecting every plan of operations which was not so devised as to enable us to employ the minimum of force with the maximum of effect; and thirdly, by steadily resisting the pressure put upon me by the Punjab authorities, both civil and military, as well as by the Commander-in-Chief, for permission to employ a force greatly in excess of what is admitted to be necessary for the purposes to which the present expedition is confined.'

To Lord Salisbury, December 7

On December 7 he was able to write as follows: 'Our operations against the Jowakis have thus far been an unprecedented success. Our troops are now masters of nearly the whole Jowaki country. The tribe seems to be quite bewildered and cowed by the new tactics which I have at last succeeded in getting our frontier authorities to adopt. The Jowakis have shown hardly any fight, but, considering the small amount of fighting there has been, the losses of the enemy have been unusually large and our own unusually small. None of the other tribes have shown the slightest disposition to join the Jowakis,

who, being thus completely isolated, with all their strongholds destroyed and all their cultivated land in our hands, have already sent in headmen to sue for terms. All that is now necessary is that the terms imposed on them be sufficiently precautionary as well as punitive. We must secure guarantees for the future, as well as inflict punishment for the past. I anticipate from the success of this expedition the permanent establishment in India of a whole set of new and better principles of warfare. I do not think it likely that our frontier officers, having once recognised the ease, safety, and superior result of the new system, will ever again revert to the old one, which its most inveterate advocates of a year ago now admit to have been justly condemned; and I think we have heard the last of the old "British Raid." Our frontier authorities, both civil and military, write me word that not only has the new system of operations been signally successful against the Jowakis themselves, but that it has also made a profound impression on all the surrounding tribes, who now for the first time perceive that war with the British Government may be to them a much more serious matter than it hitherto has been.'

The Viceroy had from the beginning settled the terms which he would deem it expedient to enforce: (1) the surrender of arms, and, if possible, of ringleaders; (2) the opening up of the country byroads, which, if the Jowakis behaved peacefully in the future, would be extremely beneficial to their own trade, whilst if they mean mischief their power of doing it will thus be crippled.

These conditions were unconditionally accepted early in the following year, and the expedition was most satisfactorily concluded. A well planned

and well executed surprise movement under Major Cavagnari upon the village of Sapi resulted in the killing of one ringleader and the capture of four others concerned in the outrage on the Swat Canal in the autumn of 1877.

Writing to Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff (then Mr. Grant Duff), on February 24, 1878, Lord Lytton refers to the success which had attended the adoption of the new system of dealing with the constantly recurring frontier raids.

To Mr. Grant Duff, Feb. 24, 1878

'When I came to India I found that our officials on the Punjab frontier were profoundly ignorant of the geography of the country five miles beyond their border. No map of it existed. Within our border raids were constantly perpetrated with perfect impunity by the same tribes. The raiders, though a mere handful of men, invariably found our frontier authorities totally unprepared for their visitations and invariably escaped unharmed, after cutting the throats, and plundering the property, of the Queen's subjects. . . . *Now*, at least, the whole Jowaki country has been accurately surveyed and mapped from end to end; practicable roads have been made through it in all directions; every one of its strongholds have been destroyed; the fighting power of the whole tribe has been broken; the fighting men of the tribe have surrendered all their European arms, and have acquiesced in the expulsion of all the ringleaders concerned in recent raids. Not another tribe, or section of a tribe, has ventured to stir hand or foot in support of them, though I was confidently assured, of course, by those very experienced gentlemen (of whom George Selwyn once said that, had their advice been always listened to, "Gad, sir, we should still be champing acorns") that all the Afridi tribes

Lord Lytton to Mr. Grant Duff, Feb. 24, 1878

would unite to support the Jowakis in resisting the outrageous conditions prescribed by the Viceroy; that in the course of a few months we should have the whole frontier seething with fire; that the much-offended and all-powerful Amir of Kabul would then descend upon us like a wolf on the fold with his 'gleaming cohorts,' and that all sorts of other terrible things would happen. The successful result, however, of the new system, which I have had such difficulty in getting applied (and for the application of which I must say I am much indebted to the loyalty and good sense of the present Lieutenant-Governor), has established several things. It has established the fact that no Afridi tribe can resist the action of British troops (with their present arms) if these troops be employed in accordance with rational principles. It has established the perfect practicability of night surprises (if properly organised in connection with such a system), as preferable to the old system of cumbrous and protracted military operations; and, finally, it has established throughout all the border tribes such a salutary fear of our power, will, and patience that I think I can safely predict that, during my own tenure of office at least, the peace of the Punjab frontier will not again be troubled by any mere tribal attacks. I am persuaded that, under a decent system of frontier administration, occasion for recourse to military expeditions ought never to occur.'

While matters remained in a state of expectation and immobility on the Afghan border, the Viceroy was engaged in arrangements for occupying a fresh position on the extreme northern frontier of India. He carried through negotiations with the Maharaja of Kashmir for the establishment of a

British political agent at Gilgit, a small semi-independent district beyond Kashmir, upon the slopes of the range of the Hindu Kush mountains. In writing an account of these proceedings to Lord Cranbrook, he says:[1] 'Kafristan consists of a small loose group of independent chiefdoms, very weak, and, so far as I can judge, destined to be absorbed ere long by one or other of their four more powerful neighbours—Kabul, Kashgar, Kashmir, and ourselves. They are greatly coveted by the present Amir of Kabul. His absorption of them would weaken the security of our frontier by strengthening a frontier State which already commands some of the most important passes into it—a State always unreliable, at present openly unfriendly. This consideration is all the more serious because, so long as we command not a single one of its external *débouches*, our "mountain frontier," on which the "Lawrentians" profess to place such reliance, is simply a fortress with no glacis—in other words, a military mouse-trap. The absorption of the Mirs of Kafristan by any Power holding Kashgar would probably make them the political appendages of the Russian or Chinese empire (to one of which it seems probable that Kashgar must eventually belong), thus bringing either of those empires into direct contact with our own. Their absorption by ourselves is impossible, because the British public has vetoed annexation. And, moreover, so long as we can prevent them from being annexed by Kabul or the future Kashgar Power, it would certainly not be worth our own while to annex these poor and barren territories. The country of the two northernmost of these small chiefdoms (Chitral and Yassin) contains two passes,

Lord Lytton to Lord Cranbrook

[1] April 9, 1878.

The Viceroy to Secretary of State, April 9

of which at present we know very little. But, if either of these passes (the Baroghil and the Iskoman) be practicable for troops, it would enable an invading force, with a fine base at Yarkand, to reach our frontier (its weakest point) by a route quicker than any other. Just before my arrival in India, Lord Northbrook, whose attention had been turned to the obvious importance of clearing up the doubt as to the character of these passes, instructed Major Biddulph (an officer on his staff, well qualified for such a task) to explore them. Owing to various unforeseen circumstances, Major Biddulph was only able to explore very imperfectly a portion of one of them. From his report it would appear that this pass is not practicable, and of the other we still know next to nothing.

'Subsequently, when it became apparent that we could no longer, rationally or safely, rest our whole frontier policy on the fiction of an Afghan alliance which does not exist and which we have no means of securing, Lord Salisbury authorised me to do what I could, quietly, to make the security of our North-West Frontier as far as possible independent of any such alliance. To the attainment of this object my efforts have been directed in various directions, and one result of them is the present more or less confidential arrangement with the Maharaja of Kashmir . . . whose loyalty can, I think, be thoroughly relied upon. If there be one thing more than another which every Indian Prince is ambitious of, it is extension of territory or rule. By the present arrangement, Kashmir is authorised to enter into treaty relations with these neighbouring chiefs, with a view to obtaining their recognition of his suzerainty in return for a small subsidy. In return

The Viceroy to Secretary of State, April 9

for this permission, the Maharaja assents to the establishment of a British agency at Gilgit to watch the frontier at that point, and the construction, at his own expense, of a telegraph from Gilgit to British territory. The Maharaja is not to use force for the purpose of extending his authority over Chitral, Yassin, or any of the other neighbouring chiefdoms; but should he at any time hereafter be obliged to resort to it for the maintenance of rights acquired by his treaties with them, he is assured of our support and assistance, if he requires them for that purpose. This arrangement was approved some time ago by Lord Salisbury, and is now in force. One of the Mirs has already signed a treaty with Kashmir, pledging his allegiance, and has sent hostages to the Maharaja's Court. I am hopeful that his example will be followed by others in due course of time. If so, we shall have secured a vicarious but virtual control over the chiefdoms of Kafristan (which will have cost us nothing) by their absorption under the suzerainty of Kashmir, our vassal. As it is, the Baroghil and Iskoman passes (*quantum valeat*) are already brought within that suzerainty. But the arrangement can only bear fruit slowly; first, because Kashmir is forbidden to use force, and the diplomacy of native Courts is always slow; and, secondly, because Kashmir is a Hindu dynasty, and these Mirs and Khans are all Mohammedan. That fact will not prevent them from placing themselves under Kashmir's protection, if they find it to their interests to do so; but it would probably throw them into the hands of the Amir of Kabul (whom they now dread and mistrust), if any attempt were made by Kashmir at forcible interference with their independence. Meanwhile the

To Secretary of State, April 9, 1878

telegraphic cable from Gilgit to Srinuggur is already in course of construction, and, I believe, nearly completed. Major Biddulph, whom I selected for the new post of observation at Gilgit, arrived there not long ago; and this is how matters now stand.'

# CHAPTER VI

## FAMINE OF 1877

Famine

THE most serious anxiety which pressed upon the Government of India this year, however, was not in connection with frontier affairs, but with the famine in the southern provinces of India.

Famine Commission

In October of the year 1876 signs of scarcity appeared in the neighbourhood of Bombay, owing to the failure of the food crops. These were the first symptoms of a famine, which in the following year proved to be 'in respect of area and population affected, and duration and intensity, one of the most grievous calamities of its kind experienced in British India since the beginning of the century. The failure of the summer rains of 1876 extended over about half of the Madras Presidency, the distress being most intense in the same tract (that lying above the Eastern Ghats) which suffered in 1853 and 1854. The scarcity was felt with great severity over the whole of Mysore (except the hilly tracts that lie along the Western Ghats), the southern half of the Hyderabad State, and all the Deccan districts of the Bombay Presidency. The area thus affected was about 200,000 square miles, containing a population of thirty-six millions.'

In the earliest stages of the famine considerable difference of opinion existed as to whether the relief measures should be mainly based on the system of

employing the people on large or on small works. Small works are easily started, with little previous preparation, require little expert skill in their supervision, and offer employment to people close to their own homes; they are therefore suitable for a slight and temporary scarcity, and for the earlier stages, when it is still uncertain whether scarcity will develop into famine; but they are liable to break down when very large numbers have to be provided for, and it soon becomes impossible to apply a strict labour test to the disorganised masses collected on such works. Moreover, the character of these works (the cleaning out and digging of tanks, repairs or embankment of old roads, &c.) is such that it is hardly possible that the money laid out on them should be remuneratively employed. On the other hand, large works, carried out under experienced officers of the Public Works Department, require much previous preparation, surveys and estimates, and involve careful organisation of the staff, housing of the labourers, provision for food and water, with sanitary and medical arrangements. But when thus started they form the best means of utilising the labour for permanent and remunerative objects. Sir Philip Wodehouse, Governor of Bombay, taking a serious view of the extent of the disaster which had befallen the country, advocated from the first the commencement of large public works. The Government of Madras, on the other hand, adopted the system of opening small and scattered works, which would not involve a large expenditure if the anticipated famine should not turn out to be very severe, and their views were at first supported by the Supreme Government.

Different systems of famine relief

Viceroy to Sir R. Temple, Nov. 30, 1876

Writing on November 30 from Multan to Sir Richard Temple, the Viceroy said: 'This calamity is an

unforeseen and serious embarrassment. As the first intimation of it only reached me on the eve of my departure from Simla, and my reasons for visiting the frontier were urgent, I have left the conduct of all correspondence with the local Governments on this subject entirely to Norman and my colleagues, whose experience of such matters is, of course, much greater than my own. We are all of us agreed, however, firstly, not to sanction the commencement, for purely relief purposes, of large, long, and costly undertakings unless the public works of that kind proposed by the local Governments have been previously approved by the Supreme Government, as advantageous or necessary in themselves and compatible with the present state of our finances; and, secondly, not to sanction, except on very clearly proved necessity, any interference with the natural course of trade. I am afraid that these principles are not in favour with either of the two Governments chiefly concerned in carrying them out; and, indeed, Madras has, without any reference to us, bought large quantities of grain at what seem to me high prices, and without any adequate cause.' 1876

Lord Lytton, however, soon perceived that tentative measures were unsuitable when the certainty of having to deal with a great and widespread famine became established, and he disapproved of sending instructions to the Bombay Government to confine its operations.

This was how matters stood when the Viceroy himself reached Bombay, and his interviews with the Governor, Sir Philip Wodehouse, and the other local authorities sufficed to satisfy him that the Bombay Government was dealing with the difficulty on sound principles, and with great discretion as well as energy.

Bombay system finally adopted

The Bombay system became, before the year was out, the universally accepted plan of dealing with labour on relief works.

After acknowledging, in a private letter, this change of opinion as to the justification of the management of the Bombay Government, the Viceroy adds:

To Sir Louis Mallet, Jan. 11, 1877

'In answering the various addresses I received at Bombay, I thought it only fair to give public expression to this opinion.' He went on to explain that, considering the gravity of the case, he had thought it desirable to invite the two Governments of Bombay and Madras to meet him at Delhi, and discuss the condition of affairs and the future policy in a personal conference. 'This, I think, has been quite satisfactory. We had a long conference attended by the two Governors, and I think it has effectually removed all misunderstanding between the Government of Bombay and the Government of India; my colleagues having agreed to modify their last despatch in a sense acceptable to the Bombay Government.' Writing to Lord George Hamilton[1] on January 22, he said: 'I think you can truly affirm, I certainly assert it myself, that as regards the famine difficulties the Imperial assemblage has been a godsend. Had it not enabled me to bring the two Governors into personal conference with my own Council, I really believe that we should at this moment have found ourselves in an inextricable mess. The opportunity thus afforded furnished me with the only possible means of removing what threatened to be a serious misunderstanding between the Government of India and the Bombay Government on questions of vital importance.' The presence of the

[1] Lord George Hamilton was then Under-Secretary of State for India.

Duke of Buckingham at Delhi revealed a state of things at Madras which excited the gravest apprehensions in the mind of the Viceroy. The notion of dealing with the scarcity in that Presidency was apparently to keep down prices artificially by huge purchases of grain, 'not perceiving,' writes the Viceroy, 'that the high prices, by stimulating import and limiting consumption, were the natural saviours of the situation. The result is that the Madras Government has not only shaken the confidence of a trade already shy enough, but has also created a pauper population, whose numbers are no test of the actual scarcity and whom it will be very difficult to get rid of.

Mistaken policy in Madras

'We were unanimous that this must be stopped at once, and we have come to the conclusion that our best course is to send Sir Richard Temple [1] in the character of our Commissioner, and with adequate power, to Madras. He will go there *viâ* Bombay, in order to strengthen his hands in dealing with the Madras Council by having first inspected some of the Bombay districts where similar phenomena are being successfully treated in accordance with the policy we have laid down. In the meanwhile we have forbidden the Madras Government to buy more grain as a trader, whilst authorising it in cases of necessity to purchase grain for grain wages, just as any Commissioner might do.'

Sir Richard Temple sent as Commissioner

At the earliest stage there was some excuse to be made for the policy of the Madras Government. They pleaded that the precedent of the famine in 1874, the management of which (entrusted to Sir Richard Temple) had not at that time been officially overruled, justified the purchase of grain, and they also

[1] On account of his experience in the Behar famine of 1874.

argued on the merits of the case, that the knowledge of the fact that Government possessed stores of grain which they could throw on the market or lay down at places out of the way of trade would prevent the absolute withholding of stocks or prohibitive prices, and so tend to avoid panics, one of the greatest dangers in the early days of famine. They did not appreciate the fact that Lord Northbrook and Sir Richard Temple had for the most part to deal with an isolated area badly connected with the trade centres, and that in that area the Government undertook practically to supersede private trade, and did so, but at an expense which, if applied to the area over which the famine of 1877 extended, would have brought speedy bankruptcy.

Famine Commission

In the instructions given to Sir Richard Temple by the Government of India the principle was reaffirmed that the Government would spare no efforts to save the population of the distressed districts from starvation or from an extremity of suffering dangerous to life; but they would not attempt the task of preventing all suffering and of giving general relief to the poorer classes of the community. Everyone, it was said, admits the evils of indiscriminate private charity, but the indiscriminate charity of a Government is far worse. The Government held that the task of saving life irrespective of the cost was one which it was beyond their power to undertake, but from the history of past famines rules of action might be learned which would enable them in the future to provide efficient assistance for the suffering people without incurring disastrous expenditure.

In the opinion of the Viceroy, Sir Richard Temple carried out his instructions at Madras with admirable

tact, judgment, and energy, and for the time being exerted a much-needed check on the expenditure of the Madras Government. He found that vast numbers were in receipt of relief who, for a time at any rate, could support themselves. Under his influence the wage rate was lowered and the supervision of relief labour was increased.

Unfortunately there was a relapse to the original condition of excessive extravagance soon after Sir Richard Temple's departure.

The grain transactions of the Madras Government continued so to alarm the Government of India that they finally gave vent to their anxiety in a despatch on the subject, the publication of which caused the Duke of Buckingham some annoyance. The Viceroy thus defended it in a letter to Lord Salisbury: 'The whole action of the Calcutta grain trade was on the point of being paralysed by the conduct of the Madras Government and its pertinacious reticence on matters demanding the utmost and most prompt publicity. Complaints and expostulations from the trade were pouring in to us daily.

Viceroy to Secretary of State, May 17, 1877

'The greatest distrust and uncertainty prevailed where it was of essential importance to establish confidence. All our representations to Madras on this subject had been ignored and disregarded. All the principal mercantile houses in Calcutta concurred in assuring us that so great was the mistrust that unless this impression were promptly removed all shipments of grain from Bengal would immediately cease. That would have landed us in a huge disaster, which neither we nor the local Government could cope with. . . .

'The case was extremely urgent, and had we not instantly made the publication of which the Duke

complains I think you would at this moment have been under the obligation of instructing us how to deal with a situation entirely beyond our own power of managing it. If there be one thing to which more than any other, in the history of this famine, I look back with unshaken satisfaction, it is the patient, persistent, and hitherto successful efforts made by the Government of India to prevent the Madras Government from stopping, by its most unwise proceedings, the action of the private trade in grain. I am also confident that if the present famine has not yet become altogether unmanageable this is mainly due to the resolute and unremitting publicity given by the Government of India to every fact connected with it.'

Rain fell throughout the famine districts of Madras in May and June 1877, but the hopes then entertained that the worst period of scarcity was over were subsequently disappointed. The state of things at Madras grew from bad to worse. The Madras Government raised their scale of relief wages. This, in the opinion of the Viceroy, was unwise, but he considered it a matter in which the Supreme Government was not justified in interfering. In Bombay, where the scarcity was the same, a much lower rate of wages was found to work successfully, and in that presidency there had been far less famine mortality. The mortality in Madras was terrible, and in the Viceroy's opinion was not a little attributable to the defective management and unsound principles of the local Government.

**Viceroy to Governor of Madras, July 6**

Writing to the Duke of Buckingham on July 6 the Viceroy expressed his distress at the great increase in the numbers receiving charitable relief in Madras without any prospect of diminution till the

next crop should be reaped, and attributed this state of things to the recent increase of relief wage, adding: 'So long as a pinched population, not habitually or by temperament very self-helpful, can live at Government expense, on high wages for light work, I greatly fear you will experience serious difficulty in forcing such a population to revert to dependence on its own unaided resources, however sufficient those resources may be. But would it not be a sound principle in such cases that Government relief should cease, as far as regards cultivators, as soon as crops have been *sown* under fairly favourable circumstances. For when this happens the cultivator can at once obtain credit for his property.'

Towards the end of July drought was so widespread as to threaten a general scarcity, and the Viceroy informed the Governor of the Straits Settlements of the failure of the crops, requesting him to communicate the information to the Governments of Cochin China and Siam, where there was abundant grain for export.

The condition of affairs at Madras by the end of July was so deplorable that the Viceroy decided to go there himself without delay. The following letter to Lord Salisbury gives a vivid picture of the existing state of things.

*To the Marquis of Salisbury*

[*Private.*] 'Simla: July 29, 1877.

'My dear Lord Salisbury,—I fear it is impossible to exaggerate the gravity of the situation we have now to recognise, and, if possible, to deal with, in Madras and Mysore. I have briefly recorded the main facts of this situation in my telegram of yesterday, and I need not now repeat what I have

To Lord Salisbury, July 29

said in that telegram. When Temple inspected the relief works in Madras, he reported that the population employed upon them was a mere mob for want of adequate supervision. The total number of the population on relief work, or in receipt of charitable aid, was then, I think, within half a million. It has now increased to one million and three-quarters (probably owing, in no slight degree, to the measures which have simultaneously lowered the rate of labour and raised the rate of wages), but the means of supervision have not been augmented in proportion; nor, indeed, so far as I can make out, have they been appreciably augmented at all. If the relief gangs, when Temple inspected them, were an unregulated rabble, what must now be their condition? But, supposing the public works staff to be adequately strengthened, all relief labour to be brought under its supervision, and that supervision to be as complete as possible, there is really, so far as I can discover, nothing to supervise. By far the greater portion of the relief labour throughout Madras seems to consist of scraping mud off a road, or out of a tank, and scraping it back again, or chopping prickly pears. According to the weekly despatch from the Madras Government to you, the grants for famine relief amounted, on the 11th instant, to two millions and a half. This, of course, is irrespective of loss of revenue, and enhanced military and other charges. So far as I can judge, this enormous expenditure will bequeath to the presidency little or no permanent benefit in the shape of any important public works. Some few works of lasting utility will no doubt have been completed or commenced, but none of which the importance will render any appreciable return for the vast outlay already incurred. But we have

now to contemplate another unexpected year of famine, with increased and increasing expenditure for an indefinite period; and I am sure you will share my anxiety that this enormous, and apparently inevitable, outlay should not, at least, be altogether wasted; that it should contribute to the permanent improvement of the presidency, and bequeath to the population some increased insurance against future famine.

To Lord Salisbury, July 29

'Of village relief throughout Madras there is, so far as I can ascertain, no organised system, nor at present any means of establishing or working such a system. The Public Works Department staff is notoriously inadequate. . . . The district officers complain that they can get no practical instructions, no practical assistance, from their Government. I notice that one of them, Mr. Oldham, reported the other day that, with the assistance of only one European, he was left to inspect upwards of 70,000 labourers. The Madras Government has recently issued an instruction to its district officers ordering them to give to persons applying for gratuitous relief practically just whatever they ask for. Some of the officers to whom this circular was addressed pointed out, and protested against, the absurdity of it; and, reluctant as I am to interfere with the proceedings of the local Government, however deplorable they may seem to me, I felt constrained to request the withdrawal of this instruction.

'In Mysore the state of things, though fortunately on a smaller scale, is even worse, so far as it goes. The returns given in last Saturday's "Gazette" are startling—

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| On relief work under revenue officers . . . | 26,158 |
| " " Public Works Department . | 24,275 |
| Gratuitously relieved . . . . . | 120,251 |

'Thus, the number employed on public works, which was very small last May, has considerably diminished since then, whilst the number of persons in receipt of gratuitous relief has largely increased.

'Compare the corresponding returns from Bombay:

| | |
|---|---|
| On relief works | 295,514 |
| Gratuitously relieved | 66,399 |

'In Bombay, moreover, of all the persons employed on relief work, only 27,000 are under civil agency. All the others are employed, under an admirably organised Public Works Department supervision, on works of real and permanent utility. I suspect the radical vice of the Mysore system to be the multiplication of petty useless works, which *cannot* be properly supervised, and which are supplemented by food kitchens where (as in Madras) it is practically "ask and have." Only two or three months ago there were in Mysore actually more than 2,000 petty works going on, with an average of about 30 persons upon each. For want of more recent and complete information, I cannot positively affirm, but I think it may be presumed, that since then the number of these petty works, like the area of gratuitous relief, has increased. The famine expenditure in Mysore is certainly increasing; and I anticipate that hereafter Mysore will be in no wise permanently benefited by it.

'Mysore is easier to deal with than Madras; not only because the field of operations is smaller, but also because the Government of India has, at least, some power of control and direction over the local authorities, who cannot disregard its instructions with complete impunity. In Mysore I am hopeful

that it may still be possible to effect a timely rescue by the appointment of a Special Commissioner, carefully selected and furnished with adequate powers. But in Madras what can we do? . . . I believe that Temple's mission saved us from a great catastrophe; and nothing but the conviction that a great catastrophe was impending, and could not otherwise be averted, induced me, most reluctantly, to resort to that measure. . . . But the good results of his mission were chiefly negative; and, as soon as his back was turned, everything relapsed into the old bad groove. . . . The situation in which we are now landed, with the prospect all around as black as night, is one of such difficulty that the boldest man might shrink from dealing with it. You suggested in a former letter the propriety of a famine dictatorship on future occasions. There never has been yet, and I doubt if there ever will be again, in India an occasion so urgently needing such a dictatorship, but no one in India is able to give the word of command. It is, I am convinced, not in the power of the Madras Government to cope unaided with the present difficulties and dangers; which, though partly due to its own mistakes, are also in a great degree the inevitable results of a famine which now threatens to be unprecedented in duration, extent, and intensity. The adequate management of such a famine urgently requires all the ability and experience which can be found in India. We are fighting a desperate battle with nature, and our line of battle has been completely broken at Madras. It is there, therefore, that we should at once concentrate our reserves. But I cannot, of course, force upon the Madras Government assistance which it will neither invite nor accept.

To Lord Salisbury, July 29

Need for a famine dictatorship

'My own position in reference to this situation is

extremely embarrassing. The famine department of my own Government is not a strong one. But, if the Supreme Government were composed of the ablest and most experienced famine administrators in all India, what could we do, so long as we are practically powerless to control the action or change the system of the local Government? I fully recognise the difficulty of any adequate intervention at Madras, even by yourself, if you thought our efforts deserving of support. For, unfortunately for us, the local Governments are more strongly represented than the Supreme Government, not only in your Council, but throughout the whole region of retired Anglo-India. . . . I fully and painfully recognise all the danger and embarrassment of provoking the Duke's resignation, and the clamour it would raise; and, what is more, I have little doubt that this would be the result of the slightest pressure on my part. But, on the other hand, let the Duke and his Government alone, and how are we to deal with the danger to India, and the embarrassment to our own finances, which in that case are inevitable? You see I am between Scylla and Charybdis. So long as there was a fair prospect of the worst of the Madras famine being over shortly, I have thought it best to refrain from visiting Madras; for, since it was decided not to interfere with a system I thoroughly mistrusted and disapproved of, I could do no good by going to the seat of its operations, and should only have placed the Duke and myself in an awkward position. Now, however, the situation is so alarming that (although I anticipate no practical good from the result), I feel that, "for appearance sake" alone, I ought to proceed at once to Madras; and, in order to do this, I have submitted to an operation which will, I hope,

Difficulty of interference with Madras Government

enable me to undertake the journey. . . . I may possibly be able, with the assistance of Arbuthnot, who is a Madrassee and knows the members of the Duke's Government, to persuade them to make some slight ameliorations in their present system. But these will be wholly insufficient to avert the catastrophe I fear; for their system is rotten to the core.

To Lord Salisbury, July 29

'Yours, &c.

(Signed) 'LYTTON.'

The Duke of Buckingham had published a famine minute, in which he laid down a doctrine of village relief which filled the Viceroy with 'profound distrust.' The Duke, moreover, had appealed to the public for subscriptions in aid of the famine—a step which Lord Lytton considered of very doubtful wisdom at that stage of affairs. Lord Salisbury had suggested that a dictator should be appointed for the management of famine affairs. It now occurred to the Viceroy that the Duke of Buckingham himself might be induced to occupy such a position, that in that case he might be persuaded to act independently of his Council, that the famine business could then be rescued from the circumlocution of the Revenue Board, followed by the circumlocution of the Council, and the advice and assistance secured of one or two first-rate men employed in any capacity that the Duke might please. If the Duke proved willing to fall in with such a proposal—one certainly not derogatory to his dignity—there would be no need for intervention on the part of the Government of India. The Viceroy would trust the opinions of the experts to guide the Duke, and believed that matters would then be well managed. 'I would leave him the freest possible play, suppress my own personality,

To Lord Salisbury, August 12

suspend all interference on the part of the Supreme Government, and return to Simla as soon as the arrangement was concluded. If the Duke accepts my proposal he will have a very good chance of greatly distinguishing himself, and converting an enormous administrative failure into a remarkable success. If he rejects it, the inevitable *fiasco* of his administration will be the smallest of the evils which must be anticipated.'

In the despatch addressed to the Duke of Buckingham, in which the Viceroy announced his intention of visiting the famine districts of Madras and Mysore, the general principles for the management of famine affairs were once more laid down.

Viceroy's Famine Minute

After stating that the Government of India, with the approval of Her Majesty's Government and of the people of India, were resolved to avert death by starvation by the employment of all means available, the Viceroy first expressed his conviction that 'absolute non-interference with the operations of private commercial enterprise must be the foundation of their present famine policy.' This on the ground that 'free and abundant private trade cannot co-exist with Government importation,' and that more food will reach the famine-smitten districts if private enterprise is left to itself (beyond receiving every possible facility and information from the Government) than if it were paralysed by State competition.

With regard to the population out of work and unable to buy food at famine prices, he explains that it is the policy of Government to employ such people on relief works, but that such relief employment, at a subsistence rate of wage, should be provided on large, fully supervised works of permanent benefit to

the country. 'The advantage of large works of this kind over petty local works is twofold—firstly, the obligation to do a full day's work, at a low rate of wage, and to go some distance to work, keeps from seeking relief people who can support themselves otherwise; and secondly, the money expended on such works bequeaths permanent benefits to the country.'

For people who, from infirmity or social custom, or other reasons, are unable to work, 'the State must, when the sources of private benevolence run dry, provide gratuitous relief.' But such relief imposes upon the State a task of peculiar difficulty and delicacy, 'for it is the inevitable tendency of all gratuitous relief afforded by the State, if it be not supervised and restricted with the most scrupulous exactitude, to intrude injuriously on the field of relief labour, and thus demoralise large masses of the population.' Then follows a description of the forms in which such relief may be given.

Finally, two main objects are put forward towards which the endeavours, and all the available power, of the Indian Government and local Government should be directed. 'Firstly, the framing and working of a scheme whereby 4,500 to 5,000 tons of food may be carried daily into the famine country; and, secondly, the selection and commencement of large public works of lasting utility, on which all the able-bodied relief recipients of either sex and any age should at once be employed.'

The Minute closes with these words: 'Nothing could be further from my intention than to interfere unduly with the local authorities, and the devoted officers, who have so long and zealously been combating the growth of a gigantic catastrophe.

Although, up to the present moment, the result has not equalled the assiduity of their untiring efforts, yet the energy and devotion of the district officers throughout Madras, during the protracted and increasing strain upon their physical and mental faculties, cannot, I think, be too highly or gratefully appreciated. It is not to inadequate energy or intelligence, but to inadequate numbers and inadequate executive powers, that I attribute the incompleteness of their success.

'My journey, therefore, to the famine-stricken districts of Southern India, and more especially my journey to Madras, is prompted by the hope that it may enable me to strengthen and augment the means on which His Grace the Governor of that presidency is now dependent for the satisfactory solution of a problem as serious as any which has ever occupied the mind or taxed the abilities of an Indian statesman.'

The Viceroy starts for Madras, Aug. 17

It was now settled that the Viceroy should leave Simla on August 17, accompanied by his private secretary, Sir Owen Burne, his military secretary, Colonel Colley, his famine secretary, Mr. Bernard,[1] and Mr. Arbuthnot,[2] his minister in council for famine affairs. The Duke of Buckingham was to join them at Bellary and proceed with them to Madras. A few days before his departure Lord Lytton wrote to his friend, Sir James Stephen:

'I start for Madras next Thursday with but very little hope of being able to avert what threatens to be an unprecedented catastrophe. . . . The weather is hideously hot, and I start on my journey with a

[1] Now Sir Charles Bernard.
[2] Now Sir Alexander Arbuthnot.

profound sense of discouragement, having little assistance here, nor, in short,

> " hope, nor health,
> Nor that content, surpassing wealth,
> The sage in meditation found."

If I survive this adventure, you will doubtless hear from me at Madras.'

Lord Lytton's despondency at this crisis was greatly increased by the illness of Sir John Strachey —the colleague and friend upon whose help and counsel he most relied. Sir John was suffering from a serious affection of the eyes, and the doctors feared that he would have to choose between resigning his office and losing his eyesight.

*To Lady Lytton*

'Dhurmpore: August 17, 1897.

'. . . . The journey thus far has not been at all intolerably hot. The tonga afforded abundance of shade, and being in the van of the tonga train I and Colley escaped most of the dust we raised for the benefit of those who followed us. Of these I think my jemadar came worst off, arriving here like an old man with perfectly white hair, or a marquis of the days of Louis XV. We came at a tearing pace; but this during the latter part of the drive involved a good deal of shaking and jolting. We stopped for ten minutes at Solen, where we had tea, and shook hands with the Rana. Here we were met by Pattiala's people, who have provided me with a table-cloth and a quilt so beautiful that I long to steal them. After dinner we were treated to a masked dance by the " folk of the place." But Colley and I

Viceroy's journey to Famine Districts

being agreed that no one above the age of four could appreciate this amusement we speedily adjourned to whist. Our whist table was set in the open air, our party consisted of the Commissioner W. Nisbet, Colley, and George.[1] I left off at 11 P.M., having lost five points.

'At dinner I sat next to Stuart Bayley, in whom I found a most agreeable companion. We talked of metaphysics, philosophy, Darwin, Herbert Spencer, &c., and for a while forgot the famine—of which, however, I received reports this morning that are most discouraging, except as regards Madras, where apparently light showers still continue.'

Jubbulpore.

Aug. 19

'. . . We have now got over the hottest parts of our journey, and really the reported excessive heat has been a mere bugbear—none of us have suffered from it—and as for myself, I was never better in my life. I have received here a very satisfactory letter from Salisbury approving my proposed plan of operations with the Duke, and promising to support it. . . . If the Duke accepts my suggestions readily I see no reason why we should not be all back at Simla very soon. But, in spite of Lord Salisbury's support, I anticipate a good deal of difficulty and resistance. However "time and the hour wear out the longest day."'

In writing to Lord Salisbury from Jubbulpore Lord Lytton, after thanking him for his promised support, tells him other members of his Council are opposed to his scheme, and prefer to it a proposal that no plan of action should be devised till the

[1] Colonel G. Villiers.

Viceroy has arrived at Madras and inquired for himself into the details of famine administration there. Such a course, however, appeared to him to involve endless embarrassment and conflict. 'Virtually we should be sitting as a committee of inquiry on the Madras Government. Every man's back would be up and every man's hand against us, and we should have to fight every inch of ground. It is, I am convinced, impossible that we could conscientiously arrive at a final verdict favourable to the Madras Government, and any other would, of course, be bitterly resented and probably appealed against. The only objection that I can see to my own plan is that the Madrassees will, I am told, resent the introduction of even a single officer, however eminent, into their presidency. But do what we will we cannot avoid some difficulty and soreness.'

**Failure of transport at Jubbulpor**

At Jubbulpore Lord Lytton found 24,000 tons of grain (only a comparatively small portion of it under cover) ready and waiting for transport south, but the communicating line of railway was only able to carry one thousand tons *per week*. Not only was the 'carrying power insufficient on the line, but the pressure of famine traffic began seriously to impede foreign export traffic.' This, the Viceroy feared, if not remedied, might lead to a commercial crisis at Bombay, involving an immediate rise in exchange, with serious loss of national credit and wealth.

While at Poona, Lord Lytton took steps in communication with the managers of the railway lines, and with the assistance of the Department of Public Works, to relieve the block by borrowing, buying, and increasing in all possible ways the available rolling stock.

*To Lady Lytton*

'Poona: Aug. 21.

'We reached Poona at 11 P.M. last night, all of us in excellent condition. This house, the famous Fitzgerald one, is really most beautiful and luxurious—by far the most *civilised* official residence I have yet seen in India, with a very pretty garden. I am told it is unusually hot here, but I don't find it hotter than Simla, and I think the climate agrees with me better. I have written to-day a hurried letter to Strachey on business.'

The Viceroy's plan of campaign was to explain to the Duke what must be done, and, if he succeeded in convincing him of the wisdom of his proposals, to leave the entire management of the scheme in his own hands. Failing this, however, and in the event of it being found that he did not possess the legal power to act the part of famine dictator himself, the Viceroy was prepared to appeal to the Secretary of State to choose between the Duke and himself. The day before his arrival at Bellary and his first meeting with the Duke, Lord Lytton wrote, 'My legal powers are much feebler and fewer than I supposed. Nothing left but sheer diplomacy. I go to battle as Louis Napoleon went to Sedan—without hope. But we must do our best.'

Aug. 26
First interview with Duke of Buckingham

On August 26 they reached Bellary, and the first interview between the Viceroy and the Duke took place.

Two days later Lord Lytton writes to his wife: 'I am thankful to say I feel much relieved in mind by my conversation of yesterday with the Duke, which was, I think, on the whole decidedly satisfactory.

'I reached Bellary about six, and remained in my

room till dinner-time. There was a large dinner (in the house of the collector, Mr. Masters, who put us up) and reception afterwards. No business was discussed that day, but as I was bidding him good-night, the Duke (who was to have remained here two days with me) informed me he was obliged to return to Madras to hold a Council in the afternoon of the following day. It struck me that this meant stealing a march on me. So after talking over with Colley (who has been most helpful to me) our plan of campaign, I sat down at once and wrote the Duke a letter of twelve pages fully explaining my views and intentions, and leaving him only the alternative between the removal of the seat of the Supreme Government to Madras, and the plan originally devised by Strachey with some modifications, and I think improvements, suggested by subsequent reflection and information. It was a quarter to 3 A.M. when I had finished my letter, which I delivered to the jemadar, to be handed to the Duke early next morning, as the Duke was to meet me after breakfast and I thought it best to have it all down in black and white before we met.

To Lady Lytton

'I then went to bed, but was too restless to sleep sound, and was waked at six by the guns of my own salute. My plan, I think, succeeded well, as it prepared the Duke for what he was to hear, and I found him more tractable than I had expected. I think the neck of the difficulty is now broken. It is quite astonishing how well I continue to keep. If I get through my week at Madras successfully, I shall fling up my hat and sing, "Io Pæan!"'

Leaving Bellary on August 28, the Viceroy reached Madras on the 29th. On the 30th he wrote to Lady Lytton: 'Hurrah! I think that I may now

safely inform you that everything has been satisfactorily settled between the Duke and myself.

Aug. 30
Details of agreement with the Duke

'Briefly, these are the details of the arrangement now concluded.

'1st. Principles laid down in Viceroy's minute are to be carried out, all relief operations being transferred to Public Works supervision.

'2nd. Duke takes famine management into his own hands.

'3rd. An officer selected by Government of India to represent its views will be attached to the Duke as "personal assistant" for famine affairs.

'4th. This officer to be General Kennedy.

'5th. All famine papers to be submitted to Duke by local famine secretary, through General Kennedy. Duke's orders upon these to have force of Orders in Council without consultation of Council.

'6th. Members of Board of Revenue to act as travelling commissioners in the interior, reporting direct to Duke. Famine correspondence to be only communicated to Board for record, after action has been taken on it by Duke.

'7th. Circles for supervision of gratuitous relief to be greatly strengthened by imported officers.

'8th. Ditto. Public Works staff.

'9th. All relief to be subsidiary and conducive to main object of getting people on big works with proper task.'

In another letter he expresses his thankfulness at the success of his mission, adding: 'The more I think

over what must have happened if I had failed to settle matters amicably with the Duke on their present footing . . . the more I am convinced that we have very narrowly escaped a very dangerous and discreditable situation. . . . My plan of campaign with the Duke, which has been so successful, was laid out by Colley, and owes its success to his military genius.'

Viceroy attributes success to Colley

On September the 6th the Viceroy received the following telegram from the Secretary of State:

Sept. 6 Telegram from Secretary of State

'I have heard with great satisfaction of judicious arrangements concluded between you and the Duke of Buckingham. I believe that concentration of famine management in his hands will be of greatest advantage. The appointment of General Kennedy, in whom you repose well grounded confidence, will also be very beneficial. I approve generally of your arrangements, reserving any observations I may have to make in matters of detail. Greater stringency in confining relief to those unable to work is no doubt in many places necessary, but every precaution should be taken that consequent requirement of task work is not allowed to press dangerously on those who by privation have become partially incapacitated for labour.'

In acknowledging this telegram in a private letter the Viceroy writes:

*To the Marquis of Salisbury*

'Bangalore: Sept. 9, 1877.

'My dear Lord Salisbury,—I feel relieved of a great anxiety by your welcome telegram approving of the arrangements concluded with the Duke of Buckingham at Madras. I think I can assure you

To Lord Salisbury, Sept. 9

that every provision has been made, and every precaution taken, on behalf of those who have fallen out of condition and are quite unfit for work. Of such persons (putting aside the aged, the infirm, and the diseased) there is undoubtedly a large number; and the care of these should, I conceive, be the special function of the relief camps. All the officers in charge of these camps aver that wanderers, picked up in an advanced stage of emaciation, recover flesh and strength after about a fortnight of the diet they receive in camp, and that in less than a month all who are not diseased become perfectly fit for work; but at present there is no work to put them on to, and all the camps I inspected were swarming with fat, idle, able-bodied paupers, who had been living for months in what is to them unusual luxury at the expense of Government. The main difficulty I now experience will be to get these demoralised masses on to real work of any kind, even when the work has been provided for them. The Duke showed me, on the day I left Madras, a letter from the collector of one of the largest Madras districts complaining that his camps were beginning to get flooded with immigrants from other parts of the presidency where minor works "near the homes of the people" had already been started, and where agriculture itself was not yet entirely arrested. Though many of these persons, who had come from a considerable distance, arrived in an emaciated condition, it had been proved on inquiry that all of them were able to support themselves. But they positively refused to do any kind of work, or to return to their own farms and villages, having heard that plenty of food was to be had for nothing elsewhere.

'The despatches I send you by this mail report

in detail not only the arrangements concluded at Madras, but also the chief facts which have come under my personal notice as regards the condition of the people and the crops. I will therefore confine this letter to the private particulars of what I have seen and done. In the first place, the alarming financial and social results of the famine management (or mismanagement) in Madras are clearly not attributable to the cause I had supposed. I expected to find there a bad system at work; but what I found everywhere was the total absence of any system at all. It is equally certain that this must be attributed to radical defects in the organisation of the existing administrative machinery—the ideal of a circumlocution office. Every one, from the highest to the lowest—the Duke himself, the Government secretaries, the collectors, the Department of Public Works officers—acknowledged the evil, deplored it, and dwelt on the urgent necessity of administrative reform. I need not now trouble you with illustrations of this particular evil (which will, I hope, be remedied by the measures adopted at Madras), but some few which came prominently under my own notice were very startling.'

To Lord Salisbury, Sept. 9

Popularity of the Duke of Buckingham

Of the Governor himself the Viceroy writes in the same letter: 'I must, however, bear witness to the general esteem and affection with which, so far as I can judge, he is regarded by his subjects in Madras. These feelings are justly due to the Duke's thorough straightforwardness, benevolence, and honesty. He is an exceedingly hardworking man, with an astonishingly omnivorous appetite for detail and a remarkable aptitude for dealing with it. But this I think he indulges too much. He seems to be very slow in taking in a general principle and seeing how it should

be applied, or why it must be applied. Herein lies the only cause for anxiety I feel about his personal administration of the famine portfolio. Already he does too much, and thus not enough is done. I am hopeful, however, that General Kennedy's influence will gradually be able to rectify the present method of conducting famine business at Madras. I have been greatly struck by Kennedy's tact, ingenuity, and address in the conduct of personal intercourse with other men, his quickness in recognising, and his skill in managing, their idiosyncrasies. These qualities are rare in Indian officials, so far as my experience of them goes, and he seems to possess them all in a high degree.

'Relief camps. Of the relief camp I visited at Bellary there is not much to be said. It is a *bona-fide* relief camp, though not, I should say, so well organised as it might be. The relief camps in and around Madras are simply huge popular picnics, whose inmates are at present thoroughly enjoying themselves at the Government expense.

**Conversation with officer on a relief camp**

'The following is a faithful summary of my conversation with the officer in charge of the Palaveram camp, when I visited it:

'*Self.*—All these men and women seem in splendid condition for work.

'*Officer.*—Yes. Unluckily we have no work to give them, and if we did not keep them here they would soon drop out of condition again. It is the future population that we are saving.

'*Self.*—Then you have stringent precautions, of course, for the prevention of wandering from the camp? I see none, but I presume they exist.

'*Officer.*—Oh dear, no. None are required. The people know when they are well off; and they

have never been before, and will never be again, so well off as they are here. The famine has been a godsend to all the people you see here, and there is not a man, woman, or child in this camp who will not bitterly regret the cessation of scarcity. Look at our sleeping and feeding arrangements! This class of the population are never so comfortably lodged or so highly fed at home. In addition to the rations you have seen, those who are in delicate health receive fish and meat twice a week, and all receive sundry little condiments and spices to season their rice and dal. This prevents the diet from being monotonous, and keeps up a healthy appetite. You see we have no need of precaution against wandering from the camp. Our difficulty will be, by and by, to get the people out of it. . . . To Lord Salisbury, Sept. 9

'We pass to the huts containing the women and children.

'*Self.*—I notice that, whilst all these children are in a genuine famine condition, the women they seem to belong to are uncommonly fat. What is the reason of this?

'*Another Official* (interposing).—Ah! This is one of the saddest facts we have to deal with. Though all these miserable mothers are apparently in such fair condition, their milk has run dry. We are now providing milk for all these poor infants. Allow me to draw your attention to another very curious fact. You will probably have noticed that, whereas the majority of the children have red hair, all their mothers have black hair. Now this is one of the most mysterious, but general, effects of famine on the constitution of infants. It turns their hair red.

'*Self* (to First Officer privately as we leave the

To Lord Salisbury, Sept. 9

ward).—Do you believe those fat women are the mothers of all those lean babies?

'*Officer.*—Of course not. All the babies are hired, borrowed, or stolen. Famine babies are now at a premium, as the presentation of them obliges us to admit their supposed mothers.

'I compliment —— on the great cleanliness of the camp. "Yes," he replies, "we have now got our organisation well in hand, and have not had a single case of fire in the camp." "No," I say, "I noticed that your kitchens are well away from the huts." "Oh, it is not that. But you see all the men smoke in their huts. Tobacco is one of the little luxuries we allow them, poor fellows, and if we did not look sharp the whole camp might be burnt down."

'Here we rejoin —— who has been conversing through an interpreter with a portly old native almost entirely nude, who has been on gratuitous relief for the last three months, and whom —— has discovered to be "a fine old farmer."

'—— (to fine old farmer).—And do you find more flavour in the vegetables now than last month?

'Fine old farmer says, he does; and —— explains to me that among the sad phenomena of the famine is the tastelessness of the vegetables given in relief food to season the rice with, owing to the recent hot dry winds.

'The above, which is not an imaginary conversation, will suffice to illustrate the manner in which relief operations are treated in Madras. All the camps I have seen are splendidly organised as regards sanitary and conservancy arrangements. But they are treated like "model farms," regardless of expense.

'Before leaving the subject of Madras, I may

mention that I offered the Duke, if he wished it, to take the famine business of the Government of India into my own hands, and also to attach to it any Madras officer in whom he had confidence. The Duke did not seem to think that these arrangements would make any material difference to him; and there was no Madras officer whom he felt able to recommend. But as regards the first of my two proposals, I have decided on other and general grounds to take the Famine Department into my own hands, and have already informed you of this by telegraph. . . . To Lord Salisbury, Sept. 9

'And now, my dear Lord Salisbury, I must end this long letter with many apologies for the length of it. Temple has behaved exceedingly well, and greatly helped me by assisting all my arrangements, at some sacrifice, I fear, to his own convenience and the strength of his famine staff.

'I start to-night for Ootacamund, where I meet the Duke again; thence to Mysore itself. From Mysore back here, when the above-mentioned arrangements for the management of the Mysore famine will be published in an extraordinary gazette; and, on the same night, I shall return to Simla without stopping.

'Arbuthnot, having surrendered to me all the famine business, returns to Simla to-night. With the exception of the North-Western Provinces, from which the weather reports are still bad, I am sanguine that the rain, which has now begun to fall everywhere else, will have broken the neck of the famine and materially reduced its duration and intensity. But in this province the severity of the famine has thrown everything out of gear, and so greatly changed for the worse the financial condition and prospects

that I fear it will be absolutely necessary to postpone the restoration of the province to native rule beyond the date hitherto contemplated.

Sept. 9 'Yours, dear Lord Salisbury, very faithfully,

(Signed) 'LYTTON.'

Abundant rainfall in Madras

The new arrangement between the Viceroy and the Madras Government had hardly been completed when the long expected rain fell abundantly. The hearts of the people revived, and they dispersed so rapidly that the numbers which in September were 2,218,000, by December had fallen to 444,000.

The people in Madras connected the advent of the rain with the Viceroy's visit, which they looked upon as a most propitious omen.

*To Lady Lytton*

'Neddeevettam! Sunday, September 16, 1877.

Sept. 16 'The Duke drove me in his pony carriage this morning to the first stage of our little journey hither. The morning was fine, and for the first time I have seen Ootacamund. *Having* seen it, I affirm it to be a paradise, and declare without hesitation that in every particular it far surpasses all that its most enthusiastic admirers and devoted lovers have said to us about it. The afternoon was rainy and the road muddy, but such beautiful *English* rain, such delicious *English* mud. Imagine Hertfordshire lanes, Devonshire downs, Westmoreland lakes, Scotch trout-streams, and Lusitanian views! I write from a cinchona plantation which I have been visiting and where I pass the night.'

Ootacamund

In the province of Mysore a partial failure of the rains in 1875 had been followed by an almost complete failure in 1876, and severe famine set in

in December 1876. When the Viceroy visited Bangalore in September 1877 the famine was at its height, the number of people on relief was very large, and much the larger portion of them were in receipt of gratuitous relief. The conflict between large and small works had gone on here as elsewhere, but had taken a peculiar form. The engineers of the Public Works Department had an abundance of large schemes in hand, suited for the employment of great masses of labourers, but they contended that their business was only to take on able-bodied labourers who could perform the usual task at the usual rate of pay, and that all persons who were unaccustomed to labour or weakened by famine should be employed by the civil officers on local, small works. They refused to alter the system of petty contract, or to introduce that of daily payment for work done, and they asserted that whatever work was done under their department must be done according to strict departmental rules, and that they must not be turned into relief officers. The result was that in September 1877 less than the usual number of labourers was employed on departmental works, a nearly equal number was employed under civil officers on small, scattered works all over the country, and the great majority were suffering under the most demoralising form of public charity—gratuitous relief distributed in the form of cooked food to paupers herded together in poor houses. Even the personal authority of the Viceroy failed to break down the Chief Engineer's objections to the wiser policy or to convince him of his error, and Lord Lytton had to remove him elsewhere, replacing him by Major (now Colonel Sir Colin) Scott-Moncreiff, R.E., whom he brought down from the North-West Provinces. At the

Famine in Bangalore

Major Scott-Moncreiff, R.E., appointed Chief Engineer

same time he placed the administrative charge of the famine in the hands of Mr. (now Sir) Charles Elliott (also from the North-West Provinces), to whom he gave the title of Famine Commissioner of Mysore, and he appointed as his secretary Mr. A. Wingate, of the Bombay Civil Service, who had earned much credit by his management of famine relief in one of the Bombay districts.

Mr. Charles Elliott appointed Famine Commissioner of Mysore

By September 27 the Viceroy had accomplished his personal tour through the famine districts and was once more back at Simla.

Viceroy returns to Simla, Sept. 27

Writing to General Kennedy, on October 3, he congratulates him on the admirable orders which he had just issued 'for the general guidance of relief operations at Madras,' and which he anticipated would be equally useful for the guidance of the famine officers at Mysore.

The principal changes made by the new Famine Administration in Mysore were to transfer all the paupers who were able to do any work, however slight, from the 'kitchens' to relief works, to remodel the kitchens as hospitals for the sick, and to establish a system of village relief in their own homes for those who were unfit to be employed on works. These efforts were greatly aided by the bountiful rain which fell in September and October, filling the tanks, securing the rice harvest, and affording abundant employment to agriculturists in the fields. The number on gratuitous relief, which stood at 220,100 in September 1877, had fallen in June to 11,000, and the number employed in relief works, after rising from 49,000 to 86,000, fell in June to 37,000. Mr. Elliott left the province in May 1878, making over the post of Famine Commissioner to Major Moncreiff, who, with Mr. Wingate, remained in Mysore till August, by

New Famine Administration

which time hardly any need of famine relief continued to exist. In May, Lord Lytton imposed on Mr. Elliott the duty of drawing up the Mysore Famine Report, and wrote a minute on it (November 1878) when it was completed, from which the following extracts have been made:—

**Lord Lytton's Minute on Mr. Elliott's Mysore Famine Report**

'The first step taken, in September 1877, was to reinforce the Mysore staff with trained Civil officers and officers from Her Majesty's Army, whose duty was to direct relief operations; with engineers to manage relief works and to organise famine labour; with medical officers to arrange famine hospitals and tend the sick. The next step was to gather all the threads of famine administration into one hand, and to lay down detailed rules for the guidance of famine officers of all grades. And the last step, which followed close upon the others, was to effect a thorough and intelligent inspection of all the famine operations throughout the country. It is only too clear that all this ought to have been done in December 1876. The report tells of the many difficulties which were met in the management of the relief works; in getting the people to come to these works; in employing persons in different stages of weakness so as not to overtask them, while giving them some incentive to live and work; in clearing the relief kitchens and carrying the inmates with their own consent to the works, if they were fit to labour, or to their own homes if they were past work; in establishing and working a system whereby house-ridden folk were relieved in their homes; in preventing peculation; in securing to the province a moderate out-turn of useful work in exchange for relief given to the able-bodied; and, lastly, in helping the ryots to recover their position and independence by a judicious distribution of the

Minute on Elliott's Report

alms sent from Great Britain, Ireland and the Colonies for the aid of the famine-stricken people of Southern India. . . .

'I am deeply indebted to Mr. Elliott for his excellent report, which tells truthfully and graphically the story of much human suffering, borne with the patient endurance characteristic of the people of India, and gives a faithful account of the early failure and subsequent success in relieving a great population from the dreadful effects of prolonged famine. . . .

'The thanks of the Government of India are due to Mr. Elliott for the ability and energy with which he carried out their famine policy in Mysore. Though the province and its people were new to him, he promptly mastered the position. He organised and directed relief operations with a patience and good sense which overcame all difficulties, and with the fullest tenderness to the people in dire calamity. To Major Scott-Moncreiff, the Chief Engineer, and to Mr. Wingate, the famine secretary, I tender the hearty acknowledgments of the Government for the skill, knowledge, and zeal which they brought to bear on the difficult questions connected with the conduct of relief work and the organisation of gratuitous relief.'

Rain in the North-West

Rain now began to fall in the north-west as well as in the southern provinces of India, thus saving only just in time the Punjab and North-West Provinces from a famine worse and more widespread than any which had yet been known. Writing to the Queen, on October 11, the Viceroy was able to send a favourable report of the result of his journey. 'The measures in which I was so fortunate as to secure the Duke of Buckingham's co-operation in

Madras, and those which before leaving Bangalore I set on foot throughout the Mysore provinces, are already producing excellent results, and the weekly reports, both from Madras and Mysore, now show a steadily increasing diminution in the number of persons gratuitously supported by the State, as well as a marked improvement in the health of those put upon works and a reduction in the death rate. This improvement in prospects so anxious and almost desperate a few weeks ago is no doubt partly due to the recent rains and the partial revival of agriculture; but the rains could have effected no appreciable change for the better, for many months to come at least, had no change been previously effected in the system of famine relief, and as regards Madras I think the improved condition of that presidency is mainly attributable to the ability with which General Kennedy is discharging his very difficult and delicate task there. This officer is certainly one of the ablest of your Majesty's public servants in India. It is entirely owing to his great foresight and energy that whilst the Madras famine has cost the Government of India over ten millions, the Bombay famine, under his management, has cost only four millions, although a much larger saving of human life has been effected in Bombay than in Madras.'

Viceroy to the Queen, October 1

Whilst admitting that private subscription had its use and place, the Viceroy continued to hold the view that any appeal to private charity in England was 'a dangerous folly' unless by previous arrangement a sphere of operation could be marked out for it which should not overlap the field already occupied by the Government's organisation. Ultimately, in accordance with Lord Lytton's views, the sums collected were profitably used in helping the farmers, who in

the time of famine had been forced to sell their agricultural implements, to buy them back, thus saving them from degenerating from the condition of peasant proprietors to that of coolie labourers. His own subscription of 1,000*l.* towards the Madras Charitable Relief Committee was a practical answer to the report propagated by some persons that the Viceroy was personally averse to private subscriptions.

November 1

Madras

Writing to Lord Salisbury on November 1 the Viceroy says: 'Kennedy has really done wonders in Madras, and the enormous reductions he has effected in the numbers gratuitously relieved (especially at Salem) convincingly demonstrate, I think, the waste and mismanagement of the old system, against which I have been in vain protesting ever since January last. For these reductions, which have afforded the greatest relief to our Treasury, have been effected without loss of life or health in a single instance.'

Mysore

In Mysore the results of the famine operations were equally successful, and here also the Viceroy's visit had been followed by an abundant rainfall. The mortality in that district had been more patent and terrible than anywhere else, and compared to Madras the state of things did not seem to improve so rapidly—but, considering the state of exhaustion in which the people were, and that famine administration had to be organised from the very foundation —the Viceroy declares to Lord Salisbury that he is 'really startled at the complete and rapid success with which the efforts of the responsible Mysore officers in the execution of the new system had been attended.'

1878

During the following year (1878) all relief operations were finally wound up. At the close of 1877

a measure was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of the Indian Government, by Sir John Strachey, which, supplemented by the Acts previously passed in that year, was designed to provide for the future cost of famines.[1]

**Legislation to provide for future famine expenses**

In a work published by Sir John Strachey and his brother on 'The Finances and Public Works of India,' it is written: 'A nobler, more humane, or wiser programme was never devised by any Government for the benefit of a country than that put forth by the Government of India in 1878 for the protection of India against this most terrible and ruinous and far-reaching of all natural calamities; and until it is brought into far more complete operation than has hitherto been permitted, the most urgent of the duties of the British rulers of India to the vast population they have undertaken to govern will be left unfulfilled.'[2]

It was Lord Lytton's conviction, a conviction shared by all the leading men in India, that the wisest policy was, by the construction of a network of cheap railways and carefully planned works of irrigation, to do all that it was in the power of a Government to do to prevent the frightful calamities of famine to which India is still exposed, and he believed this could be done not only without finan-

[1] The first new taxation was the Public Works cess of 1877, imposed on the land in Bengal, which yielded about 355,000*l.* New cesses were also imposed in 1878 on the land in the North-West Provinces, Oudh, Punjab, and Central Provinces, yielding about 170,000*l.* A license tax on traders was first levied in the North-West Provinces in 1877, and was afterwards extended to all India, and developed so as to include officials and professional men, thus becoming to all intents and purposes a tax on all incomes except those derived from land; its maximum yield was estimated at 820,000*l.* The total amount of what has been called the Famine Insurance Taxation was therefore about 1,345,000*l.*

[2] Page 170.

cial risk, but with certain financial advantage. This policy was set forth in a speech delivered by Lord Lytton at the close of the Legislative Council held on December 27, 1877, a speech which Sir John Strachey has characterised as worthy 'to be remembered among the wisest utterances of Indian Governors.' The principles therein laid down may be understood from the following extracts.

Lord Lytton's speech on Famine Legislation, Dec. 27, 1877

'Of the countless suggestions made from time to time, and more especially during the present year, for rendering less bitterly ironical than it still seems, when read by the sinister light of recent events, that famous inscription on the huge granary built at Patna for "*the perpetual prevention of famine in these provinces*," there are only three which merit serious consideration. They are, *firstly*, EMIGRATION; *secondly*, RAILWAYS; and *thirdly*, IRRIGATION WORKS. Unfortunately for India, however, the first of these three material factors in the practical solution of problems similar to those we are now dealing with is inapplicable, or only very imperfectly applicable, to the actual conditions of this country. The first condition requisite to render emigration available as a precaution against famine is a normal excess of the population as compared with the food-produce of the country; the second condition is sufficient energy, on the part of the surplus population, to induce it to seek a higher standard of material comfort than that to which it is accustomed; and the third condition is a foreign field of labour in which this higher standard may be reached. Now, none of these conditions are sufficiently developed in India to justify reliance upon emigration as an efficient auxiliary in our struggles with famine. Of our whole population only a small portion as yet exceeds its food-producing

Lord Lytton's speech on Famine Legislation, Dec. 27, 1877

power. The possible increase of this proportion of the population will undoubtedly augment our future difficulties, if, in the meanwhile, no adequate correctives be applied to them. But in those parts of India which, during the last two years, have most suffered from scarcity, the population only averages at 250 inhabitants to every square mile; and, since those districts comprise large areas of uncultivated land, this average cannot be regarded as at all excessive. In the next place, there is no contesting the fact that, in spite of the inducements offered to emigration by this Government, in spite of the widespread organisation for the recruitment of it established by Colonial Governments, and in spite of the encouraging example furnished by that small number who, having tried the experiment of temporary emigration, return, after a few years' absence, in possession of savings which they could not otherwise have stored by the labour of a lifetime—in spite of all these things the people of India *will not* emigrate. The uncomplaining patience of the Indian ryot has a profoundly pathetic claim upon our compassionate admiration. In no country of the Western world could a national calamity, so severe and prolonged as that which has now for more than twenty-four months affected one-half of this empire, have lasted so long without provoking from the sufferings of an ignorant and starving population agrarian and social disturbances of the most formidable character. But for this very reason we cannot safely frame any plans for improving the condition of the Indian ryot in exclusive reliance on his spirit of adventure. And, although the exportation to foreign countries of large numbers of the people, without reference to their feelings and in

Lord Lytton's speech on Famine Legislation, Dec. 27, 1877

opposition to their known inclination, is a policy which might possibly have been enforced by a Moghul Emperor, it is certainly not a policy which can be adopted by a British Government. It is a very significant fact that those of our native subjects who do occasionally emigrate belong to the least, rather than the most, densely populated parts of the country. Finally, it must be borne in mind that if to-morrow all the native races of Hindustan were animated by a simultaneous impulse to emigrate, there is at present no field of foreign labour capable of absorbing a proportion of the enormous population of this continent sufficiently large to make any appreciable difference in the general condition of the remainder. Our colonies take from India, annually, a few thousand labourers. Multiply that number by ten, or even twenty, and the percentage of Indian emigration would still bear but an insignificant relation to the number of the whole non-emigrant community. For all these reasons, although emigration unquestionably claims our fostering encouragement, I fear that for many years to come we must practically exclude this expedient from the list of those on which we mainly rely as a means of insuring the population of India against the calamities of periodical famine. The conclusion thus arrived at forcibly confines our immediate efforts to the most rapid development, by the cheapest methods, combined with the most appropriate and efficient application, of the only two remaining instruments for increasing the produce of the soil, facilitating its circulation, and thereby improving the general social condition, and augmenting the collective wealth, of the whole community. Those instruments are railroads and irrigation works. . . .'

Lord Lytton's speech on Famine Legislation, Dec. 27, 1877

After examining in detail the principles on which the development of railroads and irrigation works should be carried out, he summed up the Government policy in the following words: 'The Government of India is convinced, upon a careful review of its financial position and prospects, that the heavy obligations imposed upon it by the calamitous circumstances of recent years can only be discharged without serious risk to its financial stability by a strict and patient adherence to the principle affirmed in the financial measures we introduced last year, and developed in those which are now before the Council. That principle involves the enlargement, with adequate precautions, of the financial, and consequently also of the administrative, powers and responsibilities of the local Governments. In the next place, we believe that, if this principle be fairly carried into effect, the new imposts which the Council is now asked to sanction will, when added to the resources already created, provide the State with sufficient means for the permanent maintenance of a national insurance against famine, without heavily increasing the pecuniary burdens of its subjects. For the attainment of this object the material appliances we intend to promote, by means of additional revenue, are cheap railroads and extensive irrigation works. We are conscious of the reproach we should justly incur if, after such a declaration as I have now made, the prosecution of these necessary works were commenced, suspended, or relinquished according to the increased or relaxed pressure of annual circumstance or the intermittent activity of spasmodic effort. We therefore propose to entrust, in the first instance, to the local Governments the duty of framing a sufficient and carefully considered scheme of local railroad and

Lord Lytton's speech on Famine Legislation, Dec. 27, 1877

irrigation works. We are prepared to provide them with the means whereby they may, from year to year, work systematically forwards and upwards to the completion of such a scheme. The funds locally raised for this purpose will be locally applied. But provincial Governments will have to meet the cost of provincial famines out of provincial funds, to the fullest extent those funds can bear. They will find that thriftless expenditure in one year may involve the risk of diminished allotments in subsequent years; and I cannot doubt that the unavoidable recognition of this fact will make them wisely eager to spend the requisite proportion of their annual income upon well planned and carefully estimated railway and irrigation works, which will be their best insurance against the losses of famine, and the postponement of all administrative progress which famine generally entails. It will be the special duty of the Public Works Department of this Government to keep those objects constantly in view of the local Governments, and to assist them no less constantly in their endeavours to give a rational preference to really useful and remunerative works over those more captivating, but less compensating, subjects of expenditure which in all comparatively small communities so powerfully appeal to provincial pride, professional proclivities, or popular pleasure.

'The specific projects now announced to this Council I have not presumed to put forward as the enunciation of any new policy. On the contrary, I should have spoken with much more hesitation if I imagined myself to be treading upon ground not long since surveyed by experienced authorities; and the strongest recommendation I can claim for the views I have expressed is that they differ in no important

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particular from those of the eminent statesmen who have preceded me in the office I now hold. But between the present and all previous occasions on which the Government of India has declared its policy and principles in reference to the prevention of famine, there is one essential difference which I am anxious to impress upon your attention. I can well imagine that many of those I am now addressing may be disposed to say to me: "Your good intentions are possibly sincere; but the path to the nethermost pit is already paved with good intentions. Promise is a good dog, but Performance is a better; we have often heard the bow-wow of the first; we have yet to see the tail of the second. We have been told over and over again by the highest authorities that India is to be insured against famine in this way, or in that, but when famines come upon us we find that the promised way is still wanting. The current claims upon the activities and resources of the Government of India are so numerous, so pressing, so important, official forces and imperial funds so necessarily limited, that when once the daily, hourly strain of a great famine has been removed from a wearied administration and impoverished treasury, its fearful warnings are soon forgotten; its disquieting ghosts are quickly exorcised by the conventional declaration of some unexceptionable principle; its bitter memories decently interred beneath the dull *hic jacet* of a blue book; and there, for all practical purposes, is an end of the matter."

'Well, then, I think I am entitled to point out to the Council that we are not now fairly open to this customary criticism. We do not speak without having acted: and we promise nothing which we

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have not, after long and anxious consideration, provided ourselves with means of performing. I must have very imperfectly explained myself thus far, if I have failed to make it clearly understood that I am not now speaking of what we ought to do, or would do, to insure this country against the worst effects of future famine had we only the means of doing it: but of what we can do, and will do, with the means already provided for in the measures now before the Council. I do not mean to say that the construction of such an extensive system of local railroads and irrigation works as we propose to undertake will not be the gradual task of many years. But I *do* mean to say that, in the manner and on the principles already explained, we are now providing for the prompt commencement and uninterrupted continuation of this great and necessary task. We are systematising a policy the principles of which have been repeatedly approved and proclaimed by our predecessors. We are associating with it the interests, the powers, and the duties of our local administrations. We are providing them with the means of permanently prosecuting and developing it, not without reference to our financial control, but exempt from the distressing uncertainty which has hitherto been inseparable from the practical execution of this policy, in consequence of the obligation which till now has rested on the Government of India, with the very limited funds at its disposal for the prosecution of public works, to choose from year to year between the conflicting claims upon its purse of the various and dissimilar localities of this spacious empire. . . .

'If you look back over a wider and a longer tract of experience than that which is covered by the

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history of India, if you embrace in one view our own history with the past history of other countries in other climates, you will find that the principles on which we have lately acted, and on which I trust we shall continue to act, in dealing with seasons of calamitous drought have been found no less applicable, no less efficient, in other countries similarly affected than they have proved to be in this country, wherever they have been intelligently understood and loyally carried out. There is, I venture to think, no more striking illustration of this truth than the history of the scarcity that occurred in central France during the year 1770–71. That great statesman, M. Turgot, was then Minister. His administrative ability was equalled by his philosophical power of thought; and, fighting with difficulties, in many respects almost identical with those which we ourselves have lately had to deal with—difficulties partly material, but greatly aggravated by the prevalence of extremely erroneous economical conceptions, Turgot conceived, developed, and, in the face of great opposition, carried into effect views no less identical with those which have guided our own action as to the essential importance of guarding the perfect freedom of inland trade in grain; of improving the internal communications of the country; and of providing relief works of permanent utility upon which to employ the suffering population. Here, to-day, in India, those views are as sound and as applicable as they were in the Limousin a century ago. If, then, from the past we look forward into the future, why, let me ask, may we not hope that under improved conditions of administration, and with increased development of those material appliances which civilisation creates for the provision of

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national wealth, India will eventually enjoy as complete an immunity from the worst results of scarcity as that which now exists throughout those regions of France where but a century ago such a result might have seemed as difficult of attainment as it now appears to be in many of our own provinces?'

These plans, however, were destined not to be carried out, at least at that time. The English Government had taken alarm at the apparent increase of expenditure in India, and a Committee of the House of Commons decided that a large reduction should be made in the outlay on Productive Public Works, and that the borrowing of the Government of India for this purpose should be curtailed so as not to exceed for the present the amount of 2,500,000*l.* a year. It was not till the Report of the Famine Commission had restored public confidence in the really productive and remunerative character of these works that Parliament allowed the Government to increase its annual borrowing up to the limits of 3,500,000*l.* a year.

Famine Commission

Lord Lytton was not content with the active steps he took to make himself acquainted with all the details of famine distress and to supervise and direct the measures of relief. He saw that famine must be treated as a periodically recurring calamity, and that the time had come for collecting and handing down to posterity, not only the experience which had been gained as to the most efficient way of dealing with famine when it occurs, but also the knowledge which had been accumulated as to how to forecast its imminence, and the measures best calculated to obviate or to lessen its severity. Accordingly, he proposed and obtained sanction to the appointment of the Indian Famine Commission,

and in May 1878 he laid down the principles which were to govern the scope of their inquiries. They were directed to investigate the effect of famine on the vital statistics, and to report how far 'local influences, peculiarities of administration or tenure, climate, soil, water, density of population, system of cultivation, &c., have tended to mitigate or intensify its inevitable effects.' The character of the works on which relief was to be given, the need of a special system of village inspection, the restrictions under which gratuitous relief can safely be given; the duty of the Government in respect of the supply, importation and distribution of food; the benefit which might be expected from the extension of irrigation canals and railways, or from improvement in the system of agriculture, from encouragement of emigration, and from suspension or remission of the land revenue, and the relations to be observed with Native States in famine management, were among the chief topics expressly brought to their notice.

Famine Commission

The Famine Commission completed its labours in July 1880, and their report, which embodied the principles hereafter to be adopted for famine administration, was at once accepted.

The great famine of 1876–78 was followed by a long period of fairly prosperous years, during which local scarcities occurred from time to time, but no widely spread catastrophe overtook the agricultural population. This period was utilised in carrying out the recommendations of the Commission, and when famine again visited the land, in 1896, the Government and the country were found in a very different state of preparation from that which had existed in 1876. A Famine Code had been drawn up in every province, comprising in the fullest detail

Effect of Famine Commission on Famine of 1896

Famine Commission

the rules under which every branch of the Administration was to act, and the manner in which the services of every agent were to be utilised in carrying out the measures for relief. An Agricultural Department had been created, whose special charge it was to bring together a comprehensive and exact record of the agricultural, vital, and economic condition of the people, and to co-ordinate the machinery necessary for combating the disaster. Lists of works were drawn up for every district, on which the masses of men deprived of their usual field occupations would be employed. Rules were framed for utilising the existing staff and creating additional impromptu establishments for the supervision of these works and for the distribution of gratuitous relief to non-workers in their homes. The principle was established, that unless under certain peculiar local conditions, Government ought not to intervene in order to control or aid the activity of private trade in the supply of food to the distressed tracts, and that its functions should be confined to the improvement of communications, and especially to the construction of railways by which the requisite supplies could be brought in. Accordingly, when the famine of 1896 broke out, it was found that in every tract to which the Commission had pointed as both liable to the occurrence of drought and insufficiently provided with the means of obtaining food, the necessary railways had been constructed, and the whole length of railway communication had risen from 8,200 miles in 1876 to 19,600 in 1896. With one or two exceptions, all the irrigation canals recommended by the Commission, and several not suggested by them, have been carried out, and the area irrigated in this way and rendered completely independent

of the accidents of the season has risen from 7,000 square miles in 1876 to about 12,000 in 1896. Everything possible has been done at the same time to increase the area protected, though less securely protected, by tanks and wells. There has been much legislative activity, directed to the improvement of the relations between the Government and the landlords, and between the landlords and their tenants, and facilities have been granted for remission or suspension of the land dues and the granting of loans from the public treasury. Universal testimony is borne to the success with which the recent famine of 1896–7 has been met, both as regards the prevention of mortality, and disorganisation of native society, the useful objects on which famine labour has been employed, and the economy with which the work has been carried out. This success is largely due to the far-seeing policy of Lord Lytton, in his determination that the experience gained under his Administration should not be wasted or forgotten.

Famine Commission

Of the financial measures for providing for the cost of recurring famine, which have been so misdescribed and misunderstood under the name of 'The Famine Insurance Fund,' more will be said in another chapter dealing with the various financial reforms of Lord Lytton's Viceroyalty.

# CHAPTER VII

## RUSSIAN MISSION TO KABUL. WAR OF '78. FLIGHT OF SHER ALI

ALL communications with the Amir of Kabul having ceased with the termination of the Peshawur Conference in March 1877, there followed an interval of suspense and inaction on the Afghan frontier. But in April 1877 war broke out between Russia and Turkey, and in January 1878 the Russian army had passed the Balkans and encamped before Constantinople; whereupon the English Government had made overt preparations for armed intervention, and a body of Indian troops had been summoned to Malta. The reverberation of these great events had been felt throughout Asia, for the Russians had taken measures to counteract English intervention in Europe by moving troops towards the Afghan frontier and by sending a mission to the Amir. The mission seems to have left Samarkand on June 14, the day after the first meeting of the Congress of Berlin. In the meantime Lord Salisbury had, in March 1878, become Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Lord Cranbrook succeeded him as Secretary of State for India.

Russian mission to the Amir

On receipt of this news Lord Lytton wrote to his first chief:

April 3, 1878.

'My dear Lord Salisbury,—It is with a real pang that I read your telegram informing me of the change

To Lord Salisbury April 3

which deprives me of the chief to whom I am indebted for great forbearance, generous support, and considerate guidance. I shall ever recall with grateful feelings the support you have given me in every principal episode of the time during which I have had the honour to serve under you. The cessation of our direct official relations is a sad event in my life, nor are my regrets wholly selfish, for the withdrawal from the India Office, especially at this moment, of your long experience of Indian administration and intimate knowledge of the character of the men engaged in it will be a real loss to India. On behalf, however, of the highest public interests, on behalf of the character of the Government and the honour of the nation, I must confess that I unfeignedly rejoice to know that the conduct of foreign affairs has now passed into your hands.

'Notwithstanding the innumerable obstacles to a "bold foreign policy" which you mentioned in your letter, and which I keenly recognise, I feel confident that our foreign policy will now be at least a strong and intelligible one, though prudent not pusillanimous, and if flexible, as every foreign policy must be, still not aimless. Assuredly never did an English Minister assume the seal of the Foreign Office at a time more pregnant with difficulty and anxiety, nor can the blunders and neglect of twenty years be rapidly repaired. But your courage is the herald of your success, and if only you are adequately supported by the Cabinet and the country I feel sure you are destined to be one of England's greatest Foreign Ministers. Such a Minister she never needed more than now. I cannot sufficiently express

the deep sympathy and affectionate interest in your most anxious but beneficent task with which I am,

'Dear Lord Salisbury,

'Yours ever obliged and faithfully,

'LYTTON.'

From Lord Salisbury he received the following letter:

'April 5, 1878.

From Lord Salisbury, April 5

'My dear Lord Lytton,—I have passed from the quiet haven of India to the stormy sea of foreign politics, and I now write no longer, alas! in official relations, but merely to say good bye. I shall retain long a very pleasant recollection of my association with the earlier years of your Viceroyalty and with your vigorous famine, financial, and political administration, and shall watch, so far as I have the opportunity, the development of your policy with the keenest interest. A great career of activity and fame, during the three years of your official tenure yet remaining, lies before you, and I earnestly hope you may have health to fulfil the bright promise of its beginning. I have to thank you very cordially for your hearty and loyal co-operation during a period that has been always full of difficulty, and often of anxiety. The two offices are so placed towards each other that they tend naturally to friction, and it is only by such friendly and considerate conduct as you have shown that it can be avoided. I am sure that you will find in my successor a character with which you will sympathise, and that he will heartily appreciate you. Pray convey to Lady Lytton our kindest remembrances and regards, and

'Believe me ever, yours very sincerely,

'SALISBURY.'

At the time Lord Cranbrook succeeded Lord Salisbury at the India Office the situation in Europe still seemed likely to lead to war between England and Russia, and it was not till the result of the Berlin Conference was known in the following July that the fear of such an event could be dispelled. The Viceroy's letters, therefore, at this time go fully into the preparations which should be made in India in anticipation of an attack by Russia in Central Asia at the same time that war was declared between the two Powers in Europe.

Writing to Lord Cranbrook on April 8, 1878, he says:

Viceroy to Lord Cranbrook, April 8

'Indian statesmen, however widely they may differ as to the right policy for securing it, have always, I believe, agreed in regarding as supremely important the alliance and co-operation of Afghanistan in the event of India being involved in hostilities between England and Russia. . . . Lord Lawrence and his disciples, who are numerously represented in your Council, believed that the alliance of Afghanistan in the event of war between us and Russia was infallibly guaranteed by the "Masterly Inactivity Policy," which I need not here discuss. It is enough to observe that the practical failure of that policy has been complete, and, I fear, irremediable. The efforts which, as you know, I was authorised to make for improving our relations with the present Amir of Kabul have also failed completely; and thus Afghanistan remains, as it has been for the last six or seven years, impenetrably closed to British intercourse and alienated from British influence; whilst, in violation of the pledges repeatedly given us by the Cabinet of St. Petersburg, constant and confidential communication with the

To Lord Cranbrook, April 8

Amir is now maintained by the Russian Governor of Turkestan, who has at the present moment two agents at Kabul. The neutrality or hostility of Afghanistan are contingencies which I will presently discuss; but the first fact it behoves us to recognise as absolutely certain is that, in the event of hostilities with Russia, we shall assuredly *not* have the alliance of Afghanistan.'

Lord Lytton fully realised that 'from the moment when Russia resolved to play *gros jeu* for a stake at Constantinople which there was even the merest chance of our disputing, her diplomacy in Central Asia would naturally be exerted with more than usual activity to secure every preliminary political point likely to embarrass our action, or improve her position, in case of collision with us in this part of the world. And Kaufmann would not scruple to address to the Amir more promises and menaces than he had the means of fulfilling.' The policy of the Amir would always be to play off the two great Powers against each other as long as he possibly could, without willingly yielding to either the smallest recognised footing in any part of his dominions. But his neutrality towards us would not be a 'benevolent' one, and the duration of it was doubtful.

'Sher Ali is not only a savage, but he is a savage with a touch of insanity; and his action is, therefore, at all times liable to be dictated by a *coup de tête*. However much he may dislike, or mistrust, the Russians, there can be no doubt that his feelings towards us are those of bitter personal animosity. He has never forgiven us our arbitration about Seistan. During the last twelve months he has been arming to the teeth, and during the same time

has been in constant communication with Russia. Though our attitude towards him has been one of scrupulous abstention, yet, *more slavonico*, he declares that it is our policy which obliges him to arm. At the beginning of the Turko-Russian war he openly declared a *jehad*, not against the Russians, but against us; and he still proclaims that this *jehad* is only postponed to a more favourable opportunity. . . . He is arrogant, and overrates his own military strength. He is an Asiatic, and our attitude during the Turko-Russian war has led him to underrate ours. Finally, the taxation and confiscation to which he has resorted for the purpose of increasing his ill-paid army has exposed him to such widespread unpopularity, and his troops are so untrustworthy, that, unless he can ere long justify to his subjects the strain he has put upon them by finding foreign employment for his army, he is threatened with rebellion and assassination. Moreover, it must be remembered that Russia's retention of Abdul Rahman, a candidate for the throne, enables her at any moment to put a strong screw upon Sher Ali.

To Lord Cranbrook, April 8

'The situation I have thus sketched seems to point to the following conclusions as regards our action here in the event of war with Russia: We cannot attempt any aggressive operations against the Russians; and we cannot, without considerable preparation, which will require time, attempt any operations beyond our own frontier of a defensive, or retaliatory, character. But I think we ought *at once* to commence such preparations as will enable us, in case of need, to punish promptly any act of aggression by the Amir of Kabul. . . .

'There are some facts which it seems to me very important to bear always in mind. The dangers

To Lord Cranbrook, April 8

with which we are permanently threatened by Russia's presence in Central Asia come, not from the strength, but the weakness of her present position there. It seems to me so weak that I doubt if she can permanently hold it without extending it. Her position on this continent so far differs from ours that extension of territory will increase, not only her military strength, but also her financial resources. Extension of territory, however, must eventually bring her into contact with us. . . . Diplomacy is the natural weapon of weak Powers, and it is the diplomacy, rather than the arms, of Russia we have to fear in Central Asia. But, unfortunately for us, diplomacy is a weapon with which we cannot fight Russia on equal terms. And she knows it. The diplomacy of Parliamentary Governments is always heavily handicapped. It seems to me, therefore, that we should be unwise to neglect any opportunity which circumstances may offer us of settling scores with her by means of that weapon in the use of which we are strongest and she weakest. This weapon is the sword. (Of course, I am only speaking with reference to our relative positions and resources in India and Central Asia.) So long as peace lasts, we cannot use the sword; and our diplomacy is impotent. The declaration of war, therefore, would be an opportunity, which may never recur if we neglect it, for India to make safe all those outworks of her empire which must otherwise fall, sooner or later, into the hands or under the influence of Russia. . . .

'One last word. I am persuaded that the policy of building up in Afghanistan a strong and independent State, over which we can exercise absolutely no control, has been proved by experience to be a

mistake. If by war, or the death of the present Amir, which will certainly be the signal for conflict between rival candidates for the *musnud*, we should hereafter have the opportunity (and it is one which may at any moment occur suddenly) of disintegrating and breaking up the Kabul Power, I sincerely hope that opportunity will not be lost by us. I believe that this is also the opinion of Lord Salisbury. The best arrangement for Indian interests would be, *me judice*, the creation of a Western Afghan Khanate, including Merv, Maimena, Balkh, Kandahar, and Herat, under some prince of our own selection, who would be dependent on our support. With Western Afghanistan thus disposed of, and a small station of our own, close to our frontier, in the Kurum Valley, the destinies of Kabul itself would be to us a matter of no importance.'

To Lord Cranbrook, April 8

The first authentic news of the Russian movements, political and military, in Central Asia had reached the Government of India across Afghanistan by the month of June, 1878. During this month various warnings were received that Russian Envoys were expected at Kabul, and by the end of July it was positively ascertained that they had arrived.

Russian mission arrives at Kabul, July 22

General Stoletoff and his staff left Tashkend on June 13—that is to say, on the day when the European Congress was holding its first sitting at Berlin—and he reached Kabul on July 22, with a letter from General Kaufmann, informing the Amir that General Stoletoff was empowered by the Emperor, whose full confidence he enjoyed, to make to His Highness certain important communications with reference to the then existing condition of the relations between Russia and England, and their bearing on the position of Afghani-

stan: 'When the Russian agent at Kabul informed the Amir that a European officer of high rank was on his way to Kabul, as ambassador from the Czar to His Highness, the Amir, in dire alarm, wrote to Kaufmann declining to receive such an ambassador, on the ground that he could not possibly answer for any European officer in Afghanistan owing to the turbulent, barbarous, and fanatical character of the Afghans; and, in short, recapitulating to the Russian Governor-General all the arguments he has used to us, in justification of his flat refusal to receive an English officer. To this letter (our informants say) Kaufmann replied that the ambassador had already been despatched from St. Petersburg with the Czar's instructions, which could not now be recalled, that he was far advanced on his way to Kabul, and that the Amir would be held responsible, not only for his safety, but his honourable reception, within Afghan territory. The Amir had said in his letter that if the Russian Government had anything important to say to him, rather than receive a Russian (European) Envoy at Kabul, he would at once send one of his ministers to Tashkend, to receive the communication on his behalf, and to this Kaufmann replied that the Amir's proposal to accredit a permanent representative at Tashkend was accepted, and could not now be withdrawn without offending Russia; but that this arrangement could not supersede the special mission of the Russian Embassy to Kabul, &c. The report continues that on receipt of this reply Sher Ali, after great hesitation, has made up his mind to submit to the Russian Embassy, and has issued orders for its safe conduct to Kabul; but that he is in great trepidation, and is being pressed by his advisers to appeal to us for protection against Russian

demands, &c.' Pending the further development of this situation, the Viceroy held that the Government of India should remain 'vigilantly but imperturbably passive.'[1]

Major Cavagnari, writing at this time from Peshawur, reported that the Amir complained frequently of the unseemly haste with which the Russian authorities wished to hurry matters! Further that his rule became daily more unpopular in his own dominions, and 'that the cry throughout the length and breadth of Afghanistan' was 'for some change of any kind to take place as speedily as possible.'

As soon as the news reached Simla of the reception of the Russian Envoy at the Amir's Court, the Viceroy wrote as follows to the Secretary of State:

To Viscount Cranbrook, August 3, 1878: Simla

'It is now almost exactly a year since we addressed to your predecessor' a 'despatch about Merv,[2] which elicited from the India Office a somewhat sarcastic reply. We were then told that our warnings were witless; our anxieties, nightmares; our calculations, the crude excursions of an untutored fancy; our conclusions, airy fabrics, raised by unreasonable fears, from a foundation which, whilst we were building on it, had already vanished from the region of fact. High authorities at that time impressed on me that "the complete collapse of Russia as a great military power" rendered practically impossible any serious danger to the land-frontier of India from that quarter.

'I venture to think that our political foresight will stand comparison with that of our critics, and that subsequent events have better justified our alarm

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

[2] Despatch to Secretary of State, No. 21, July 2, 1877.

To Lord Cranbrook, August 3

than their confidence. Within the year now closing, Russia, though temporarily checked by the exceptional and unprecedented strain of her severe struggle in European and Asiatic Turkey, has made greater strides towards India than were then "dreamed of in our" repudiated "philosophy." . . .

'*Now* the Russian outposts are actually 150 miles nearer than they were *then*. Now the Russian officers and troops have been received with honour at Kabul, within 150 miles of our frontier and of our largest military garrison. And this is a distance which, even on the large-scale maps recommended to us, looks very small indeed. . . .

Scientific frontier

'It is because I attach supreme importance to the basement of our Indian frontier policy upon definite guiding principles, and the direction of it to an intelligible practical object, in complete and constant accordance with the deliberate conclusions of the Cabinet, that I venture once more, and most earnestly, to urge upon the practical consideration of Her Majesty's Government a question which is vital to India. . . . .

'With some slight modifications, which I will explain in the course of this letter, the views formed and put forward, even before I reached India, have been strengthened by subsequent local knowledge and two years' active experience of Indian frontier administration.

'These views may, I think, be thus formulated:

'I. Although, undoubtedly, a small, friendly, and comparatively weak Asiatic State would be to us a more convenient neighbour than a great European, military, and rival Power, yet it is almost absolutely certain that in the ordinary uncorrected, and probably incorrigible, course of events all inter-

mediate States between our own Asiatic Empire and that of Russia must ere long be absorbed by one or other of the two rival Powers; and we shall then find ourselves conterminous with Russia along our North-West Frontier.

To Lord Cranbrook, August 3

'II. We must, therefore, carefully consider, and decide beforehand, while there is yet time for consideration and scope for decision, where such contact can be admitted with the least inconvenience and injury to ourselves.

'III. The line of contact selected by us, while we have still the power of selection, must be a strong military line.

'IV. But our present frontier line, which, if closely approached, would leave in the hands of our great and energetic rival all the outer *débouchés* of the passes leading into India is a hopelessly bad line. The great natural boundary of India to the north-west is the watershed formed by the range of the Hindu-Kush and its spurs; and that range, with such outposts as may be necessary to secure the passes, ought to be our ultimate boundary.

Hindu-Kush the natural boundary of India

'I am told, by persons more conversant than I am with modern military science, that the theory of standing on the defensive *behind* a mountain range is a pre-Napoleonic idea; that it was exploded by Napoleon; and that, in modern times, whenever it has been attempted the result has in every instance been disastrous. . . . I think it possible to give to India a magnificent defensive line—perhaps the finest in the world. To the left, our flank rests on the Persian Gulf, of which we have the command, and is covered by the sandy deserts of Western Beloochistan. Our occupation of Quettah fulfils all the requisites of a strong military position on that side.

To Lord Cranbrook, August 3

For, while we can thence debouch at any moment on to the open plains (where our arms of precision and superior drill and organisation would tell with vast effect), any adversary trying to enter India from this direction would first be obliged to besiege and capture Quettah, giving us ample time to prepare for his reception, and then to force the long gorges of the Bolan Pass. In fact, I look upon our frontier from Multan to the sea as now so well guarded by our position at Quettah that it leaves almost nothing to be desired; and, from a *military* point of view, should certainly much regret any circumstance which compelled us to advance to Kandahar. *Politically*, however, it would be inconvenient to let Kandahar fall into the hands of any rival Power; and, in certain conceivable contingencies, there would also, I doubt not, be military reasons for holding this point, and so stopping the roads which lead northward to Khelat-i-Ghilzai, Ghuzni, and thence, by various passes, to our frontier above Multan.

Importance of Kandahar

'Turning now to our extreme right, we are there protected by the great Himalayan ranges and the deserts of Thibet. I originally advocated, though hesitatingly and with avowed ignorance of the precise geographical conditions, an occupation of the *débouchés* to the passes leading on to Kashgar and the Pamir Steppes. Further knowledge of the country, however, has somewhat modified that view. I can hardly imagine any circumstances in which we ought to think of engaging a force in the long and difficult passes of Kashmir for the sake of debouching on Kashgar and striking at Russia in that direction. And except for this purpose, there would be little use in holding the *débouchés* of those passes.

To Lord Cranbrook, August 3

I have also satisfied myself that it would be extremely difficult to cross the ridge, and establish ourselves in the valleys leading to Kashgaria, without being gradually drawn further down into regions where we have no real interests to defend. Moreover, beyond those mountains we should meet the Russians at a considerable disadvantage; and the passes leading through them into India are so few and so difficult that I think they could be easily stopped if occasion required. For all these reasons I conceive that, in *this* direction, our ultimate boundary should be the great mountain range, or watershed, dividing the waters of the Indus from those which run northwards; and I have accordingly instructed our officers in Kashmir, whilst endeavouring to extend our influence over the petty chiefdoms along the southern slopes of this ridge, to avoid most carefully the least appearance of interference with the tribes and races beyond it.

Frontier from Quettah to Chitral

'The question of our *central* line of defence, or ultimate boundary from Quettah to Chitral, is a much more difficult problem.

'I had advocated the continuation of the Hindu-Kush, and its spurs, to Herat, as our main line, with outposts at Balkh, Maimena and Herat, and the Oxus as our visible boundary, in accordance with the understanding arrived at between the British and Russian Governments. But I am led to believe that the people of Badakshan are much less united with Afghanistan, and much more closely connected with the Usbegs of Bokhara, Darwar, and countries under Russian influence than I had supposed; and that the Oxus, so far from forming a distinct demarcation of nationalities, is really a bond of union between the populations of the upper and lower banks of it. The

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same consideration applies, though in a minor degree, to the Afghan provinces of Balkh, &c. It has also to be considered that Russia's rapid progress and our own quiescence have rendered it extremely doubtful whether we *can now* bring under our influence the provinces on the left bank of the Oxus. It seems to me, therefore, that although perhaps we need not prematurely and definitely abandon all pretension to influence or self-assertion along the line of the Oxus, there are many arguments in favour of confining our views and efforts to the nearer mountain line; thus leaving Badakshan, Balkh, &c., to fall undisputed under Russian influence, and ultimately under Russian dominion. In that case, however, it would be absolutely necessary to secure for ourselves, and betimes, Bamian and other posts commanding the northern *débouchés* of the Hindu-Kush.

Outer and inner frontier line

'The choice thus seems to lie between an *outer line* with the Oxus for ultimate boundary, and Balkh, Maimena, Herat, for its main outposts; and an *inner line* following the mountains, with only posts like Bamian, occupied at the *débouchés* of the passes. If we chose this inner line, it might trend southward from the angle a little west of Bamian, and follow the course of the Helmund to Girishk. Here, I am considering the question exclusively in its military aspect; and, from this point of view, I think that for my own part I should prefer the inner line. But our ultimate decision will have to be made on political grounds.

Merv

'Merv is altogether beyond our sphere of practical action, even were it not now plainly too late to interfere with Russian progress at that point; although in reference to other points more vital to the existence of our Indian Empire it would doubtless

be advantageous to us to delay if possible, and by all practically available means, the occupation of Merv by Russia. To Lord Cranbrook, August 3

'Between us and Russia the really crucial point is Herat. Whilst *military* considerations, though almost evenly balanced, preponderate in favour of taking up a line of virtual resistance nearer home, all *political* considerations are strongly against the abandonment of Herat to any other Power, Persian or Russian. Herat

'Finally, there are three, and only three, courses of action still open to us if we still desire to secure the effective command of a suitable northern frontier.

'I state these three courses in a sequence which indicates what seems to me their relative merits: Frontier policy

'(1) To secure, by fear or hope, such an alliance with the present Amir as will effectually and permanently exclude Russian influence from Afghanistan.

'(2) Failing this, to withdraw, promptly and publicly, all countenance from the present Amir; to break up the Afghan kingdom (which I think we can do, if so minded, without much difficulty), and to put in the place of its present ruler a sovereign more friendly to our interests and more dependent on our support.

'(3) To conquer and hold so much of Afghan territory as will, in the failure of the two abovementioned precautions, be absolutely requisite for the permanent maintenance of our North-West Frontier. As a military operation, this will not, I think, be so formidable as it has often been represented; but, as a political measure, I should contemplate it with great reluctance only as a *pis-aller*, rendered imperative by the failure of the two preceding guarantees. . . .

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'It is now useless to recall the history of Sher Ali's long-growing hostility to us, nurtured under our "Masterly Inactivity" system, and significantly revealed by the failure of the Peshawur negotiations in 1876. The present most injudicious action of Russia fortunately affords us a convenient opportunity for making, without loss of dignity and under somewhat more favourable conditions, another—and, as I conceive it must be, a *last*—attempt to establish more satisfactory relations with the present Amir.

Proposed British mission to Kabul

'I propose, therefore, in accordance with your sanction, to send a British Mission to Kabul as soon as it can be properly organised; and to precede it by a message, through a native agent, informing the Amir that it is on its way to him, and that he is expected to receive it (like the Russian one) with all becoming honours, &c. Our British Envoy, whilst instructed to use every endeavour to conciliate and convince the Amir, will be armed with a formidable bill of indictment against His Highness; setting forth all his inimical and hitherto unpunished acts towards us, his attempts to stir up a holy war against us, his systematic maltreatment of our subjects, &c., and the culminating insult of his reception of Russian officers at his capital after his flat refusal to receive there our own officers, &c. The precise instructions to this mission will require very careful consideration. But the terms I should deem it necessary to insist on (by making the Amir distinctly understand that, if he rejects them, we shall openly break with him altogether) are:

'1st. A treaty binding him not to enter into negotiations with, or receive agents from, any other State or nation, without our permission.

'2nd. The right to send British officers to Kabul for special conference with the Amir whenever we see adequate occasion for such special missions, on matters affecting our joint interests.

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'3rd. The permanent location of a British agent at Herat. It might be useful to secure the *right* to send British officers to Balkh and Kandahar, but I would certainly not break off negotiations on such a point as this.

'I do not now propose to offer the Amir any dynastic guarantees or subsidy. The latter, however, will perhaps afterwards be considered if he acts loyally towards us. Meanwhile, I would confine our promises to efficient support against any unprovoked aggression on the part of other Powers. I think that our Envoy should insist strongly on our grievances, and make the Amir distinctly understand that, if he does not now come to terms with us, we shall find it necessary to take material guarantees for the prevention of mischief or danger to ourselves from his recognised hostility.

'The precise measures which in that case I should propose to take—and which should, I think, be shadowed forth to him by our Envoy if Sher Ali proves callous to other considerations—would be: (1) an armed occupation of the Kurum Valley, with the establishment of a cantonment near the head of it, and (2) the temporary occupation of Kandahar. The Amir knows as well as we do that he is absolutely powerless to oppose either of these two measures, which will not give him even such chances of resistance as might be offered by the conditions of rough hill-fighting in the Afghan mountains.

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'The Kurum Valley is comparatively open. It is peopled by an agricultural population who have no close sympathies with the Afghans, and who hate the Amir, by whom they have been worried and oppressed. It is close to our own frontier, easily, quickly, and quite safely accessible from Thul; and a cantonment at the head of this valley would turn the Khyber Pass and Jellalabad; bringing us within a few days' march of Kabul, at Ghuzni. I believe that the Amir could not live a week at Kabul in *known* hostility to us, and with our hands so close to his throat. Nor was there ever a time so favourable as the present for bringing pressure to bear upon His Highness. The conclusion of peace in Europe has freed our hands and destroyed, at the same time, all hopes on his part of complications to us, or active assistance to himself, from Russia. The intervening tribes have become sick of his cries for help and his abortive attempts to raise a religious war, which they now thoroughly understand to have been only a political experiment. They will not now rise, as they might, perhaps, have risen a year ago. The fame of the deadly effects of our breech-loaders in the Jowaki and other recent expeditions has spread far and wide through the country, and will make its inhabitants very careful henceforth how they expose themselves to these weapons. Nor is the Amir under any illusion or doubt as to the cogent fact that, from our commanding position at Quettah, we could now at any moment lay our hands swiftly upon Kandahar; where our superior weapons and organisation would sweep away like flies the badly armed, badly drilled, and badly disciplined troops he could oppose to us.

Conditions favourable for coercing the Amir

'I do not pretend to say that I am confident about the success of the contemplated mission. It is quite

impossible to feel confidence in the result of any dealings with Sher Ali. But I feel no doubt whatever that such a mission is the best measure we can adopt in dealing with the present situation. We cannot afford to leave wholly unnoticed the public reception of the Russian mission now at Kabul. I think we are bound to take this step before taking any other; and I think there are reasonable grounds for anticipating from it a satisfactory result. More than this I cannot say. We must, of course, be prepared for failure. Much will depend on the man selected as our envoy. I am still considering this selection, but at present I am strongly inclined to choose Sir Neville Chamberlain. There is, I think, very much to be said in favour of such a choice. Sir Neville is an able, resolute man, of exceptional experience in all frontier matters. He is personally acquainted with the Amir. He knew the Amir's late father, Dost Mahomed, and he knows many of the present Afghan notables. He is thoroughly familiar with native character, and has had long intercourse with Afghans and Pathans of all kinds. He is a man of striking presence and address, and one whose name would carry great weight with the public at home. He has been to Kabul before, he knows the country well. His military experience and ability would be invaluable if Sher Ali (which is most improbable, however) attempted to place any obstacle in the way of the mission's return to Peshawur. His selection would, I think, be agreeable to Lawrence and the whole Punjab school, whose favourite hero he is; and would probably tend to conciliate, or impose moderation on, those members of your Council who are most likely to write disagreeable minutes about the mission or its results if they can

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Sir Neville Chamberlain proposed as Envoy

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get a chance of doing so. Moreover, his official rank and status, and his reputation along and beyond our Afghan frontier, would give special authority and influence to his presence at Kabul. I am not sure whether he would care to undertake this mission, or whether his health would enable him to do so. But I shall have telegraphed to you full information on the subject long before you receive this letter.

'Failing our efforts thus to effect some satisfactory understanding with the Amir (in consequence either of the non-reception or the abortive result of the proposed mission), we must, I think, without hesitation adopt the second of the three courses I have already indicated. That is to say, we must upset Sher Ali or pare his claws. The measures I would then advocate are those I have stated in the previous part of this letter—viz. occupation of the Kurum Valley and Kandahar. I am having these two operations carefully considered and planned out, without, however, making any outward preparations or doing anything that could indicate the contemplation of them. . . .'

Summary of Lord Lytton's Frontier policy

The question has often been asked of the advocates of the Forward Policy, 'How far would you go?' Lord Lytton in this letter defines clearly the possibility he conceived of giving to India 'a magnificent frontier line—perhaps the finest in the world.' The range of the Hindu-Kush he states distinctly should be '*our ultimate boundary*.' If a military point of view alone is considered he is in favour of abandoning all pretensions to influence along the line of the Oxus, leaving the provinces on its left bank to fall under Russian influence, and adopting an inner frontier line following the Hindu-Kush mountains, with certain

posts such as Bamian occupied at the *débouchés* of the passes. On political grounds, however, he contemplated the necessity of retaining influence over an 'outer line' with the Oxus for ultimate boundary, and Balkh, Maimena, and Herat for its main outposts. Merv he regarded as altogether beyond our sphere of action. It was too late to prevent it falling into the hands of Russia.

It will also be seen from this letter that Lord Lytton regarded the appearance of the Russians at Kabul as an opportunity of once more entering into negotiations with Sher Ali, and of making another attempt—though he recognised it must be the last—of securing his alliance.

**Home Government sanctions proposed mission**

Writing on August 8 to Sir John Strachey the Viceroy said: 'I have obtained telegraphic permission to *insist* now on the Amir's immediate reception of a British mission, the charge of which I have offered to Sir Neville Chamberlain, who has just accepted it.'

When the news was received at Kabul that the British Government was also about to send a mission, General Stoletoff departed, promising, however, to return shortly, and urging on the Amir the desirability of preventing if possible the arrival of the British mission. On August 23 the Amir informed the Russian Governor-General of General Stoletoff's approaching return to Tashkend with written arrangements 'for the purpose of strengthening the friendly relations *previously* established between their respective Governments.' 'I attach great importance to this expression,' Lord Lytton comments, 'because it shows that General Stoletoff's mission was not an impromptu mission, and that the object of it was merely to carry into practical effect a long-

previously established understanding with Sher Ali.' Similar evidence was furnished by Sher Ali's subsequent letters both to General Kaufmann and to the Emperor of Russia. But of these more will be said later on.

Minute on Russian mission, September 4

In a Minute dated September 4, 1878, the Viceroy wrote: 'Neither the withdrawal of the Russian mission nor any assurances on the part of Russia will cancel the fact that a Russian mission has been well received at Kabul, after one from us had been refused; and that Russian officers have had full opportunities of instilling into the minds of the Amir and his councillors distrust and dislike towards England, belief in Russia's power and destiny, and hopes of assistance against us from that country. . . .

'War with Russia is not a thing to be lightly undertaken. The obligation to undertake it for an object which might have been attained by other means would be most discreditable to our statesmanship. A British statesman, remembering the American war, and the lasting effect which a few hostile cruisers have had on America's commercial prosperity, may well hesitate before exposing British commerce to the same risks. The contemplation of war with Russia in Central Asia has been forced on my mind in the study of the anxious question now under consideration. But the more closely I contemplate such a catastrophe, the greater is the repugnance with which I regard it—a repugnance amounting almost to horror. . . . I conceive, therefore, that our first object should be to use every endeavour to re-establish such relations with the Amir as will give us due influence in Afghanistan and for ever exclude Russia therefrom; and that to

effect this we must appeal both to his fears and his hopes. . . . If it appears that we cannot find in a friendly alliance with the Amir the necessary security for our North-West Frontier, we must then be prepared to take immediate steps for making the security of that frontier independent of him. The military measures proposed for this purpose have already been indicated. . . . But as it is indispensable, both for the security of the mission and for the full trial of the pacific policy which is its object, that nothing should now be done which could in any way be interpreted to indicate hostile intentions on our part, I have withheld my sanction from any active preparations.

Minute on Russian mission, September 4

'It will be seen from what has already been said, as well as from the smallness of the proposed military preparations, that no invasion and subjugation of Afghanistan is contemplated. . . . I view an invasion of Afghanistan, like a war with Russia, as a measure which may become unavoidable, and must therefore be taken into consideration in our forecast, but which is only to be resorted to in case of absolute necessity, when all others have failed. . . . I earnestly hope and trust that we shall be able to attain, by peaceable means, a settlement of the questions considered in this Minute which shall be alike becoming to the dignity of the great British Empire, conducive to the security of that part of it specially committed to our charge, and beneficial to the neighbouring States concerned.'

The British mission was to consist of Sir Neville Chamberlain, Major Cavagnari, Major St. John, Captain Hammick, and Kazi Syud Ahmed, with an escort of 250 sabres, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Jenkins, of the Guide Corps. Two

native noblemen, one Hindu, the other Mohammedan, the Maharaja Purtab Sing of Jodhpur, and Sirdar Obed Allan Khan of Tonk were also attached to it.

The Government of India decided to announce the arrival of the mission through a special native emissary (the Nawab Ghulam Hasan Khan), who was to leave Peshawur on August 23. On the 21st, however, news was received of the death of Sirdar Abdulla Jan, the Amir's heir-apparent.

Death of Abdulla Jan

The Nawab's departure was accordingly delayed until August 30, when he left Peshawur charged with a second letter from the Viceroy to the Amir condoling with His Highness's bereavement.

Writing of this event to the Viceroy on August 23, Major Cavagnari said:

'The Amir's embarrassments have been so great of late that I should not be at all surprised to hear that the death of the heir-apparent has produced the same mental derangement he suffered from after the death of his eldest and favourite son, Md. Ali Khan. In that case he was stricken with excessive grief on account of his real affection for his son. In the present instance he will not feel the death of Abdulla Jan in the same way, but will be overwhelmed by the reflection that all the trouble he has caused both himself and the nation has been of no purpose, and that he will once more have to decide the question of appointing a successor. It will be regarded as a very bad omen, for people have already been drawing comparisons between the present state of affairs in Kabul and that which immediately preceded the dissolution of the Sikh power.'

The progress of the native Envoy towards Kabul was stopped at Jellalabad by a letter from the Amir

telling him to remain at Peshawur, that His Highness was unfit to attend to business, and that the matter must be deferred until after Ramazan, the month of mourning.

It was conjectured that the true cause of this delay lay in the Amir's desire to receive some communication from Russia before sanctioning the British mission.

The Commissioner of Peshawur, under instructions from the Government of India, then wrote to the Amir's minister to the effect that the date of departure of the British mission was fixed for September 16 or 17,[1] and would not be postponed whether the native Envoy had or had not by that time waited upon His Highness the Amir.

The object of the mission was friendly, and the refusal of free passage to it, or interruption or injury to its friendly progress, would be regarded as an act of hostility. It would not in any case enter Kabul till after the expiry of the month of Ramazan. Similar letters were sent to the Afghan authorities at Ali Musjid, Dakka, and Jellalabad.

**The Amir reluctant to receive British mission**

To these letters there was no direct reply, but, while declaring he saw no good in the visit of the native Envoy, the Amir gave permission to his Council to do as they thought best, and thereupon the Afghan authorities along the road were instructed not to prevent the Envoy passing, but *not* to say he had permission.

[2] 'The Russian Envoy is said to have taunted the Mustaufi with acting otherwise than in the interests of Kabul, and the Mustaufi retaliated. This was in open durbar. The Russian Envoy then left for

[1] It was afterwards delayed till the 21st.

[2] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

Tashkend with an escort of one hundred Kabul Sowars, saying that he would return in forty days.

'His subordinates remained behind him. . . . The Council advised the Amir to see the English Envoy, and to decide afterwards what should be done (with regard to the British mission), saying that it would not be polite to refuse to receive him.'

Thus while the Amir had attempted to delay the arrival of the British native Envoy at Kabul on account of his ill health and sorrow, he was receiving in Council members of the Russian mission and consulting them as to his conduct towards us.

The Nawab Ghulam Hasan Khan, acting upon instructions from the Commissioner of Peshawur, pushed on his journey as fast as he could and arrived at Kabul on September 10. He had been well treated during the journey, and was hospitably received at Kabul. On the 12th he saw the Amir, to whom he delivered the Viceroy's letters.

**September 12, Amir receives Viceroy's letters**

On September 17, 18, and 19 letters were received from him at Peshawur. These all described the Amir as in a bad humour, irritated at the language used towards his officials to the effect that the British mission would be forced upon him whether he would or not, but implying that if his pleasure was consulted and the departure of the Russians awaited he might be disposed to receive it. He further said 'that the Russians had come with his permission though not at his request, and that his country being exposed, and he quite estranged from the English, he was obliged to let them come on after they had crossed the Oxus; that if the British mission advanced at once it would be resisted, but that, if conciliatory letters were sent to the Amir and his

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

dignity studied, all might be arranged.' The Envoy contrived to send a separate letter in which he stated that his official letters had been dictated by the Amir, and that no one was allowed to communicate with him.

The following extract from a letter to the Secretary of State gives an interesting account of the discussions at Kabul between the Amir and his ministers relative to the reception of the British mission:

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'A man sent by Bukhtiar Khan has just returned from Kabul with the following information. The early arrival of the British mission has been announced to the Amir by the Mir Akhor; who asked for immediate orders, adding that he was continuing, under previous orders, to do all in his power to obstruct the mission. The Amir sent for the Mustaufi and Wali Mahomed Khan, and consulted them privately. The Mustaufi said "he had long been trying to persuade His Highness that the alliance with England was more profitable than one with Russia could be; that no Power had ever stopped an Envoy even during war; and that it would be better to send for the mission and hear what it has to say, than bear the blame of refusing it."

'Sirdar Wali Mahomed Khan supported the Mustaufi. The Amir said "he was so disgusted with the British Government that he could not bear to see anyone connected with it, not even this mission." The Mustaufi asked the Amir to give him a certificate that such and such an official of his had represented to him the impropriety of stopping the mission, but that he (the Amir) had not agreed with them. Such a certificate, he said, "might be of use to him in the day of adversity, and they, his well-wishers, should not be held responsible by the people, for not

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having understood the state of affairs." The Amir replied "very angrily and bitterly": "Perhaps you want this certificate from me to show the English." The Mustaufi said: "He had nothing to do with the British Government, and had asked nothing from any Government, but that he spoke with a view to the welfare of the Amir, who must do as he thought best." The Amir remarked that "to allow the mission to come just as the British Government wished it to come, was the same to him as if it came against his own wishes." At this moment a letter arrived from Mir Afzul Khan (of Kandahar) to the effect that, in his opinion, after hearing what was going on at Kabul, the Amir had better allow the mission to come and receive it with honour, and that the Amir should well weigh the demands of both the British and Russian Governments before choosing between them. The Amir remarked that "this Sirdar was too old to understand political matters." The Mustaufi returned home in anxiety, remarking "that it was strange that the Amir neither had any assurance from Russia, nor any disposition to settle his differences with the British Government. Perhaps the days of adversity had arrived." The messenger adds: "The Amir is daily, and most anxiously, expecting the return of the Russian Envoy. The remainder of the Russian mission under two European officers is still at Kabul."'

Lord Lytton comments upon this: 'I cannot, of course, vouch for the complete accuracy of the above information, but I think it was given to our messenger by the Mustaufi himself, who is obviously unwilling to pull and sink in the same boat with the Amir. According to recent information, of slightly earlier date, the Sirdar who took my (still unan-

swered) letters to the Amir, Nawab Ghulam Hasan, was received at Kabul without any of the customary honours, by special order from the Amir.'

Sir Neville Chamberlain reaches Peshawur, September 12

In the meantime Sir Neville Chamberlain and the other officers of the British mission had reached Peshawur on September 12. Major Cavagnari had been negotiating with the independent Khyber tribesmen for the safe conduct of the mission, and all had gone well till, on September 14, the commandant of the Amir's troops at Ali Musjid sent to Peshawur to summon back to the pass all the Khyberi headmen, and they feared to disobey lest their allowance from the Amir should be stopped. Sir Neville Chamberlain wrote to the Afghan commander, Faiz Mahomed, that a friendly mission from the British Government was about to proceed to Kabul *viâ* the Khyber Pass, that any negotiations which had been carried on with the independent tribesmen were for the sole object of arranging with them for the safe conduct through the Khyber Pass, and that they had been given clearly to understand that such negotiations were in no way intended to prejudice their relations with His Highness the Amir and the people of Afghanistan. He therefore trusted the assurance would speedily reach him that the mission would be safely conducted to Dakka, but that if the answer proved other than he expected, he would have no alternative but to make whatever arrangements might seem to him best for carrying out the instructions he had received from his Government.

Faiz Mahomed replied on September 16 that the mission could not be allowed to pass without the Amir's consent, but that the Mir Akhor was expected from Kabul with further orders.

News of the Mir Akhor's arrival was received on

the 18th of September, but it was reported that his object, instead of being of a friendly character, was to see that Faiz Mahomed did not flinch from the execution of his orders.

In the opinion of the Viceroy, the time had now come to bring the situation to a decisive issue. In a letter written to the Secretary of State early in October he recapitulates the circumstances which led to the advance of Sir Neville Chamberlain's mission as far as Jamrud. 'In submitting to you proposals for the *immediate* despatch of a British mission to Kabul as a preliminary measure, and the least aggressive of those rendered necessary by the Amir's reception of a Russian mission after the repeated rejection of an English one, I dwelt specially on the necessity of my having authority to *insist* upon the reception of this mission as a *sine quâ non* condition of sending it at all. That condition you sanctioned officially, giving me the requisite authority early in August. Your telegram was sent on August 3. Again, on the 13th of the same month, when telegraphing to you further details about the organisation and movements of the mission, I took special occasion to repeat "I cannot *propose* it unless I have authority to *insist* on it." To this reiteration of the understanding on which I was acting no objection was made or suggested by Her Majesty's Government. The well-understood object of the mission was to bring the Amir's relations with the British and Russian Governments to the earliest and most decisive test. Meanwhile, as time went on and my letters to the Amir demanding his reception of the mission remained unanswered, it became as clear as anything could possibly be to Sir Neville Chamberlain, to myself, to our frontier authorities, to the Punjab

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Government, and to my own Council that the Amir was resolved to prevent our bringing matters to a test with him, and that for this purpose he would neither receive, nor refuse to receive, our mission; neither say no nor yes to the Viceroy's request for its immediate reception on business declared to be urgent and serious, but keep it waiting indefinitely on the threshold of his dominions, without any answer at all, while the Russian mission still remained at his capital as a studiously insolent and significant advertisement to all India, and all Central Asia, of the impunity with which he could slight the friendly overtures and brave the long restrained resentment of the British Government. Such a position we could not possibly accept with either dignity or safety. It was rapidly undermining, all along our frontier, the confidence of our subjects in our power and self-respect. I consequently informed you by telegraph, on September 8, that the mission would leave Peshawur on September 16. On September 13 (at a time when I knew by your letters that you were absent from the India Office), I received the following telegram from the India Office: 'Official reply to remonstrance from St. Petersburg on way London. Important to receive this before Chamberlain starts.' It was perfectly obvious that no communication from St. Petersburg (especially if it were the sort of reply that might be confidently predicted to the sort of remonstrance which had been made there) could have the smallest practical effect upon the previously recognised necessity for the mission we were sending the Amir, or the conditions requisite for maintaining the dignity of that mission and our own. It was equally obvious that if the expected Russian answer contained a single

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word that could render expedient any modification of the instructions given to Sir Neville Chamberlain for his guidance at Kabul, the modified instructions could reach him without difficulty long before his mission reached Kabul, if it were allowed to proceed, whilst on the other hand they would be useless if the mission were not allowed to proceed. Nevertheless, on receipt of this telegram of September 13, and in compliance with it, I delayed the departure of the mission from Peshawur from September 16 till the 21st. But by that time the negotiations with the Khyberis (reported in my telegram of the 17th, and opened with the knowledge of Her Majesty's Government) had reached a point which rendered further delay seriously dangerous, and indeed practically impossible. Matters stood thus: My letter to the Amir, requesting in civil terms that he would issue immediate orders for the proper reception of Sir Neville's mission, had been, as you know, accompanied by a friendly letter of condolence on the death of the heir-apparent. And this was well known. Now, according to native etiquette, letters of condolence are rarely written previous to the receipt of letters announcing the bereavement to which they refer. But whenever they are so written, it is considered as a very special mark of courtesy and friendship. On the other hand, to leave unanswered, or without an immediate answer, any letter of condolence under any circumstances is regarded by all Indian and Afghan Mohammedans as an unpardonable affront. No grief, no pressure of business, is considered as sufficient to justify such a discourtesy, especially on the part of a reigning prince or any person of high rank. So long as the Viceroy's letter of condolence remained unanswered

(after reasonable time had been allowed for a reply to it), so long did the British Government and its Envoy remain in the eyes of our native subjects and neighbours suffering under a tolerated affront. But it was well known all along the border that, whilst the Amir still left the Viceroy's letters unanswered, His Highness was actively sending imperative orders of some kind to his frontier authorities. It was as clear to our subjects and neighbours as it was to ourselves, that if these orders were not to receive the British mission they must be to oppose it. And no further room was left for doubt as to the nature of the orders issued by the Amir when, after receipt of them, the first act of Faiz Mahomed and the Mir Akhor was to summon away from Peshawur, under threats of the Amir's instant displeasure, the friendly Khyberis who were there in negotiation with us. Placed in this position, the Khyberis said to us—"What do you wish us to do? We don't wish to break with you, or desert, or betray you, if you really mean business. We are ready, in proof of our good faith, to escort you at once to Ali Musjid, where the power of our section ceases, but where you can promptly test the real character of the Amir's orders; and we also undertake to escort you safely back again. We know that by so doing we shall incur the Amir's resentment, but we confide in your subsequent protection. What we cannot possibly do, however, after the summons we have received, is to remain any longer at Peshawur doing nothing, not knowing whether you are going to do anything, and serving neither you nor the Amir, whilst our families and properties remain, in our absence, undefended from his authorities." . . .'

To Secretary of State

In these circumstances Lord Lytton felt that if he

did not authorise the mission to advance, and give the necessary guarantee to the friendly tribes, we should irretrievably lose the Khyberis. 'I consequently,' he continues, 'after further consultation with Sir Neville Chamberlain, authorised him to advance the mission on the 21st as far as Jamrud, which is in British territory, and thence to send forward an officer under Khyberi escort to ascertain distinctly from the Amir's authorities at Ali Musjid whether they would allow the mission to pass, returning at once to Jamrud if he received a negative answer. Of this arrangement I simultaneously informed you by my detailed telegram of September 21, which explained that any subsequent instructions (should they be necessitated by the Russian reply) would reach the mission if it advanced beyond Jamrud, any time within the following fifteen days before its arrival at Kabul.'

To Secretary of State

The mission moves to Jamrud, September 21

The Khyberis having agreed to escort the mission to Ali Musjid, or any nearer point, until it came into contact with the Amir's authorities, the Envoy's camp moved out from Peshawur to Jamrud early in the morning of September 21. As all reports agreed that resistance was intended, it was decided that the mission should stand fast, while Major Cavagnari, with a small escort, proceeded to Ali Musjid and demanded passage. The object of this arrangement was to minimise the loss of prestige which a repulse must entail, as, in the words of Sir Neville Chamberlain, 'after long warning and considerable preparation, we could not now move forward out of our territory and be openly turned back without being disgraced in the eyes of India.'

Major Cavagnari confers with the Khyberi Pass-men

Accordingly Major Cavagnari, with Lieutenant-Colonel F. H. Jenkins, in command of the escort, Captain W. Battye, of the Guides Cavalry, and twenty-

four men, with certain of the Border Khans, advanced to within a mile of Ali Musjid. The ridges beyond were held by the Amir's levies, who threatened to fire if anyone approached. Eventually a message was received from Faiz Mahomed Khan to the effect that he was about to come to a ruined tower in the bed of the stream just below where the party were halted, and that on his arrival there he would send for Major Cavagnari and three others, and would hear anything he had to communicate.

What followed may best be given in the terms of Major Cavagnari's report of September 22:

Report of Major Cavagnari, September 22

'As it appeared to me that it would have been an indignity to have remained and waited until Faiz Mahomed Khan would send for me, as well as to be dictated to as to the number of men that should accompany me (it would have been different if I had been permitted to proceed with my escort to the fort of Ali Musjid, when, of course, I would only have entered the post with as many men as the officers in command chose to admit), I determined to advance at once, with as many men as I thought fit to take, and endeavour to meet Faiz Mahomed Khan before he should reach the spot named by him.

'Accordingly, Colonel Jenkins, myself, and one or two of the Guide Cavalry, with some of the Khyber headmen and the native gentlemen marginally noted, descended without much delay into the bed of the stream and advanced to meet Faiz Mahomed Khan. A party of Afridis, headed by Abdulla Nur, a Kuki Khel, Afridi Malik, in receipt of special allowances from the Amir, attempted to stop me, saying that only four persons should advance. I rode past him, telling him that my mission concerned the Kabul officials and that I desired to have no discussion with

Report of Major Cavagnari, September 22

the Afridis. The Malik made no further opposition—in fact, he knew that most of his tribe were with me, and he himself was only acting a part to save his allowances.

'After meeting Faiz Mahomed Khan and exchanging salutations, I pointed to what I considered a suitable place for an interview; it was a watermill, with some trees close by it, and on the opposite side of the stream to the spot originally named for the place of meeting. Faiz Mahomed Khan was accompanied by the Naib, or deputy, of the Mir Akhor, a considerable number of the Ali Musjid levies, and some of the Afridi headmen of the upper villages of the Khyber and their respective followers.

'When we had seated ourselves, I commenced the interview by pointing out to Faiz Mahomed Khan that he and myself were servants of our respective Governments, and had met to carry out whatever orders we had received; so that, whatever the result of our meeting might be, there need be nothing personal between him and myself. After the Khan had fully reciprocated this friendly sentiment, I proceeded to state that he was well aware that the British Government had decided on sending a friendly mission of European British officers, accompanied by a suitable escort, to His Highness the Amir of Kabul, that the mission was encamped at Jamrud, and intended to proceed through the Khyber on the following day; that, in consequence of various reports received, I had been deputed by the Government to ascertain from the Amir's officials at Ali Musjid whether they had received instructions or were prepared to guarantee the safe passage and proper treatment of the mission during its journey to Kabul or not; and I hoped that, if there was any

latitude for independent action in the orders he had received from Kabul, he would do all he could towards an amicable adjustment of affairs between the two Governments. Faiz Mahomed Khan replied that he had every desire to act in a friendly manner, and that, actuated by such motives, he had allowed Nawab Ghulam Hasan Khan to proceed without any detention, but that his action in this respect had met with disapproval from the Kabul Durbar; that if he had not been friendly disposed he would not have consented to the present interview or have restrained his levies from firing on my party; that he had received no orders from the Amir to let the mission pass his post; and that, without such orders, he could not let it proceed; but that if the mission would only wait for a few days he would communicate with Kabul and ask for orders. I replied that my orders were distinct, and that I was instructed to say that the mission would advance on the next day unless I received a reply from the Amir's officials that its advance would be opposed; and I begged the Khan not to take upon himself such a heavy responsibility as to say he would oppose the advance of the British mission, unless his orders were clear and distinct in the matter; for, whatever his reply was, it would be considered as that of the Amir of Kabul. Faiz Mahomed Khan replied that he was only a sentry, and had no regular troops but only a few levies; but that such as his orders were he would carry them out to the best of his ability, and that, unless he received orders from Kabul, he could not let the mission pass his post. I rejoined to this, that it did not signify what the actual strength of his post was, as the mission was a friendly one and bent on peaceful objects;

Report of Major Cavagnari, September 22

Report of Major Cavagnari, September 22

and I again urged him not to take such a grave responsibility if he had any option in the matter. He replied that it was a very heavy matter for him to decide upon; as, on the one hand, he could not act without orders from Kabul, while, on the other hand, he was told that his reply would be considered as that of the Amir of Kabul. He then began with much warmth to question the friendly intentions of the British Government, by stating that it was not a sign of friendship for the British authorities to negotiate direct with the Khyber tribes, who were subjects of the Amir of Kabul and in receipt of allowances from that ruler, and induce them to escort Nawab Ghulam Hasan and also some British officers (meaning my party), without the Amir's permission. I replied that there was no cause for dissatisfaction in what had been done in the matter. It was never anticipated that a friendly mission would have met with any opposition, as such missions are never opposed in any civilised country; and that the arrangements made with the Afridis were merely to induce them to undertake the safe conduct ('*badragga*') of a peaceably disposed mission, which every independent Pathan tribe has a right to undertake in its own country.

'Faiz Mahomed Khan continued with increasing warmth to allude to the subject, and there was an uneasy sort of murmuring amongst the people around, which appeared to me—and, as I afterwards ascertained, the same idea occurred to Colonel Jenkins and to some of the native gentlemen with me—to indicate that if the discussion was any longer prolonged the movement alluded to might assume a more decided form, which might possibly be one which our small party could not deal with in a suitable manner. I

Report of Major Cavagnari, September 22

therefore interrupted the Khan by saying that the subject was one which it did not behove subordinates to discuss, and that, if the Amir considered what had been done as a grievance, I had no doubt that the British Government would give him a suitable answer. I then asked the Khan for the last time if I correctly understood him to say that, if the British mission advanced as intended on the following day, he would oppose it by force; and he replied that such would be the case. I then got up and shook Faiz Mahomed by the hand, and assured him that I had no unfriendly feelings against him personally, and that I hoped to meet him again on some future occasion. I then turned to the native gentlemen who were with me, and asked them if they did not consider a clear and decisive answer had been given; and they replied that it was so.

'In fact, there was scarcely any necessity for an interview to settle this point, as the hostile preparations made by the Ali Musjid garrison on seeing my party approach—notwithstanding that my object in coming and the small strength of my escort had been communicated to and received by the commandant of the fort and the Amir's representative, Mir Akhor—would ordinarily have been quite sufficient to indicate predetermined affront and insult; and, I believe, that with any other of the Amir's officials but Faiz Mahomed Khan, who from first to last has behaved in a most courteous manner and very favourably impressed both Colonel Jenkins and myself, a collision of some kind would have taken place. The general belief is that Faiz Mahomed Khan was acting under the direct orders of the Mir Akhor, who had been purposely deputed by the Amir to supervise Faiz Mahomed Khan's management of

Report of Major Cavagnari, September 22

the Khyber affairs, and to see that, without orders to the contrary, he checked the advance of the British mission. I have no doubt that Faiz Mahomed Khan softened down a great deal of the insult that was intended, though, short of actual collision, it is impossible to imagine what more could be done to effect the Amir's object.'

Colonel Jenkins, in his report to the military secretary of the Envoy, thus described the close of the interview:

The close of the interview

'Major Cavagnari said to the Sirdar: "We are both servants, you of the Amir of Kabul, I of the British Government. It is no use for us to discuss these matters. I only came to get a straight answer from you. Will you oppose the passage of the mission by force?"

'The Sirdar said: "Yes, I will; and you may take it as kindness, and because I remember friendship, that I do not fire upon you for what you have done already." After this we shook hands and mounted our horses; and the Sirdar said again, "You have had a straight answer."'[1]

The British mission repulsed

The advance party at once rejoined the camp at Jamrud, and the mission returned to Peshawur. A letter was sent to Faiz Mahomed intimating that his reply was understood to be dictated by the Amir of Kabul, and instructions were despatched (September 22) to the Nawab Ghulam Hasan immediately to take leave of His Highness. Sir Neville Chamberlain's mission was formally dissolved, full aid and protection, if necessary, being guaranteed to the Khyberi tribes who had given a passage to Major Cavagnari. The Punjab Government was at the same time directed to instruct the frontier officers to lose no time

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

and spare no efforts to detach from all political connection with the Afghan Government those independent tribes lying outside the northern portion of the border, whom it was most important, either upon political or military grounds, to bring permanently under our influence, to the exclusion of that of the Amir.

The view taken by Sir Neville Chamberlain of what had passed was expressed with emphasis. Writing to the Viceroy immediately afterwards, he said:

Sir Neville Chamberlain to the Viceroy

'No man was ever more anxious than I to preserve peace and secure friendly relations, and it was only when I plainly saw the Amir's fixed intention to drive us into a corner that I told you we must either sink into the position of merely obeying his behests on all points or stand on our rights and risk a rupture. Nothing could have been more distinct, nothing more humiliating to the dignity of the British Crown and nation; and I believe that, but for the decision and tact of Cavagnari, at one period of the interview the lives of the British officers and native following were in considerable danger.'

There can be no doubt, indeed, that the British officer was in some danger, for the Afghan soldiers had begun to pull back their sleeves in the peculiar manner that goes before handling of swords.

Defence of the mission

To Secretary of State, October 3

No precaution had been neglected to ensure the success of this mission. 'Our Envoy,' writes the Viceroy, 'was specially selected with a view to his conciliatory character, his pacific principles, his personal acquaintance and sympathy with the Amir. The Envoy's escort was carefully confined to the minimum of troops absolutely necessary to protect through a wild intervening tract of country the baggage of the Envoy and the costly gifts he was charged to present to the Amir.

Viceroy's defence of the mission

To Secretary of State, October 3

'The total number was only 200 men. It was therefore numerically weaker than the escort attributed by our information to the Russian mission, and certainly weaker than the customary escort of any Asiatic prince or minister proceeding on a similarly peaceful mission of State to a friendly Court. It was neither preceded nor accompanied by any hostile demonstration or military preparation. So anxious was I to avoid even the faintest appearance of a military *threat*, that pending the ascertained result of the mission I stopped the customary relief movement, necessary at that season for the health of our troops at frontier stations, and would not even allow a baggage animal to stir. In adopting and following out this course, however, one great practical difficulty (which had been clearly foreseen from the first) was how to counteract the Amir's invariable policy of evasion and delay. The waiting game was one which, unless some check was put upon it, he could continue to play against us *ad infinitum*. Unless we could bring matters to a definite issue, the situation which our mission was to represent as intolerable might have been prolonged, and the settlement of affairs my letter to the Amir had declared to be urgent might have been with impunity evaded *ad libitum*; while the British Government remained with all India and Central Asia the spectators of its ludicrous and discreditable performance, dancing attendance on the will and pleasure of a weak and insolent barbarian prince. It was for this reason that I represented to Lord Cranbrook the futility of sending to Kabul any mission at all, unless I was permitted to insist on its reception. The mission, however, never advanced an inch beyond British territory. Nor was it until after repeated

delays, which stretched patience to the verge of not merely pusillanimity, but of imprudence, and which if prolonged would have alienated from us the Budni tribes, whose friendship had been secured, and rendered practically impossible the peaceful advance of the mission to the Amir's frontier, whilst seriously increasing the difficulty and extent of any subsequent military measures for the protection of our own frontier, that matters were at last brought to a definite issue at Ali Musjid, a small fort *not in* Afghan territory, as the English Press seems to suppose, but in *independent Afridi* territory, which has been quite recently occupied by the Amir's authorities under the conditional permission of the Government of India, and in virtue of pecuniary arrangements with the independent tribes.'

Viceroy's defence of the mission

To Secretary of State, October 3

After the repulse of his mission at Ali Musjid Sir Neville Chamberlain asked some native notables (old friends of his) at Peshawur what they and the natives on the border thought of it. They replied: 'It is doubtless a studied and great affront to the British Government, but not greater than the Amir's omission to answer the Viceroy's letter of condolence, for amongst us (natives) such an omission is one of the greatest insults one man can offer another.'

To Secretary of State, October 3

*Sir N. Chamberlain.*—'Well, what do the people about here say, and what do you think we shall now do?'

*The Notables* (after much hesitation and pressing)—'Well, Sahib, to say the truth, the people say and we think that you will do nothing!'

In the telegram acknowledging the receipt of the information of the repulse of the mission the Secretary of State raised no objection to the course

which the Government of India had deemed it necessary to take under his previous sanction of its proposals.

On September 23 the Viceroy wrote to Lord Cranbrook of the measures which he now proposed to adopt.

To Lord Cranbrook, September 23

'I fully understand and personally sympathise with Sir Neville Chamberlain's irritation at the humiliating position in which he has been placed. But the sacrifice of his personal dignity was essentially necessary *pro bono publico*. Ever since the Peshawur Conference, I have been convinced that, even long previous to that date, the Amir (thanks to the uncorrected prosecution of the Lawrence-Gladstone policy) was irretrievably alienated from us. But no one else shared that conviction, nor was I permitted to act on it. The *mot d'ordre* was to describe and treat the Amir as an honoured friend, whose humours, however capricious and inconvenient, were to be scrupulously respected. When action of some kind was at last forced upon us by his reception of the Russian mission, had I entrusted the conduct of our own mission to anyone in India except Sir Neville Chamberlain the failure of that mission would have been universally ascribed to my own rash departure from the principles of the established Punjab policy, or to the ineptitude of my selected agent. This, I trust, is now impossible. The affront offered to the British Government, in the person of Sir Neville Chamberlain, is certainly not greater than any of the numerous affronts tacitly accepted from the Amir by the British Government during the last seven years. The only difference is that this particular affront is the first of the series which it has been impossible to conceal from the British public. You will observe

The Amir's hostility openly revealed

in the enclosed correspondence that Chamberlain, naturally reluctant to participate conspicuously in the reception of an apparently inevitable affront, wanted to break off negotiations with the Amir without leaving Peshawur; and that I instructed him to move his mission to Jamrud, an advanced post within our frontier, which I knew to be safe in any eventuality as soon as Cavagnari had secured the Khyberi escort. My motive for this instruction is obvious. Had relations with the Amir been broken off without any *overt* act of hostility on his part, our public would never have understood the cause of the rupture, and we should have been placed in a very embarrassing position. The Amir's policy was to make fools of us in the sight of all Central Asia and all India, without affording us any pretext for active resentment. *My* object was naturally to force the Amir either to change his policy, or to reveal it in such a manner as must make the public a partner with the Government in the duty of counteracting it. And I feel thankful to have effected this object without loss of life.

To Lord Cranbrook, September 23

'Thus far I think we have made no false move in the game, and if Cavagnari succeeds in his negotiations with the Khyberis, we have taken, and the Amir will (by bad play) have lost, the first trick.

'The second rubber now opens; and I think we begin it with the odd trump in our hands. Ordinary diplomatic action is, of course, *exhausted*, and we must immediately adopt other measures.'

For those other measures Lord Lytton was fully prepared; he had already stated what they should be. His aim was 'by means of immediate combined political and military pressure, simultaneously exerted at every point' to secure 'with the least

Military and political measures to be adopted

possible cost and inconvenience to ourselves, one or other of the two following results:—(1) The unconditional submission of the Amir; or (2) his deposition and the disintegration of his kingdom.' Military operations of a certain kind were, he now recognised, 'absolutely necessary,' and he at once sanctioned their immediate preparation. But he laid stress on the point that 'military preparations should be undertaken only in support, and not in supersession of political pressure, for which all the conditions were now peculiarly favourable.' He moreover considered 'that we should spare no effort to convince the Afghan people that our quarrel was with the Amir, who had deliberately forced it on us, and not with *them*; thus, if possible, isolating the Amir from his people, instead of uniting his people with him in a national opposition to our movements.'

He proposed within a month to reinforce Quettah with 6,300 men and twenty-seven guns, but not to move a man beyond it in the direction of Kandahar till experience had shown that the political effect of so large a force at Quettah itself was not adequate to effect the requisite pressure in the direction of Western Afghanistan. While Kandahar was thus threatened from Quettah, a force of 4,000 men with twelve guns would assemble at Thull, and from thence advance and take up a strong position in the Kurum Valley, thus indirectly threatening Kabul and Jellalabad. These lines of attack were selected as including all the advanced positions which the Government were determined to hold permanently.

The Viceroy proposed that certain political measures should accompany these military operations.

Major Cavagnari was actively engaged in negotiations with all the Khyber tribes and with the

Mohmunds with the object of 'promptly and permanently detaching them from the Amir.' With regard to other tribes, the Punjab Government, under orders from the Viceroy, instructed its frontier officers to prepare for the appearance of a British force at Thull and its immediate advance into the Kurum Valley, by completing arrangements with the Kurum tribes, as well as with the Waziris. Lord Lytton also instructed Major Sandeman to ascertain from the Ghilzais what they were prepared and able to do; and 'if proper hostages were given, and he deemed it safe, to authorise Major Browne to return with the chief of the disaffected clan now at Quettah to the Ghilzai country, and thence report on the conditions under which this important tribe can be further utilised.' Major Sandeman was simultaneously instructed to lose no time in concluding arrangements with the Kakar Pathans for placing under our complete control the shortest and most important of the alternative routes to Quettah which runs through their country. The Viceroy also proposed to open direct and indirect communications with the influential Sirdars at Kabul, for the purpose of convincing them that our quarrel was with the Amir, and not with his Sirdars or subjects.

Policy sanctioned by Secretary of State, September 26

These proposals were telegraphed to the Secretary of State on September 26, and acknowledged by Lord Cranbrook on October 1 in a telegram despatched after consultation with the Prime Minister and containing these words:

'Measures proposed in your telegram of September 26 are approved. Further proposals, if any, should be reported by telegraph.'

It was due to the assistance and courage of the Khyberis that the British Mission ever reached Ali

Musjid, or returned from it in safety. They thereby, however, incurred the resentment of the Amir, and consequently appealed to us to afford them protection against his revenge.

Sir Neville Chamberlain had assured them 'that the British Government would send its last soldier and spend its last rupee before it would allow any one of them to suffer unavenged the smallest injury from the Amir or his authorities.' Ali Musjid, in the meantime, in the heart of their pass, was in the hands of the Amir's troops, and they offered, as proof of good faith, to attack it themselves on condition that we came to their assistance if they were repulsed. While negotiations were proceeding the garrison of Ali Musjid was reinforced by the Amir's troops, and thus placed beyond the power of capture by the unassisted tribesmen. At the same time the house of the head Malik of the tribe was burnt by the Amir's people.

**Dealings with the Khyber tribes**

The Viceroy considered that this was an injury which we were pledged to avenge promptly; that, moreover, if we hesitated to expel the Afghans from the Khyber with the tribesmen, the pass would be irretrievably lost to us, for that the Khyberis *en masse*, disgusted at our want of faith, would go over to the Amir.

He was therefore in favour of placing a regiment of Guides and a mountain battery from Kohat at Major Cavagnari's and Colonel Jenkins' disposal, and intrusting to him the task of surprising Ali Musjid and taking it by storm.

Sir Neville Chamberlain, who was in Government House at Simla and suffering from an attack of Peshawur fever, was opposed to this scheme, and on hearing that the Viceroy had sanctioned it the

Government at home telegraphed a somewhat alarmed and reluctant assent. The Viceroy's object was to convince the tribes of the Khyber at once of our loyal support, and to expel the Afghans from the fort rapidly by a *coup de main*, not as part of our general military operations, but in order to restore it into the hands of the tribesmen, who would hold it themselves against the Amir. The execution of the scheme, however, was stopped by news of the still stronger reinforcements of the fort by the Amir, and as soon as it became clear that it could no longer be taken by a small force the Viceroy abandoned the attempt.

Viceroy to Major Cavagnari

With reference to this, in a letter to Major Cavagnari, the Viceroy wrote: 'I feel that the only awkwardness of our position is in reference to the Khyber tribes, which your able and successful negotiations have detached from the Amir; and that upon you must unavoidably fall the delicate and difficult daily task of minimising to the utmost the awkwardness of this position.

'I think, *first*, that you may tell the friendly Khyberis, without hesitation, that the course of our quarrel with the Amir may be long or short according to circumstances, but that the end of it is certain, and that when the score is finally settled the Khyber Pass will most certainly not be allowed to remain in the hands of His Highness, or ever again to fall into them. It is, therefore, for the Khyberis to consider betimes their future interests in reference to this settled determination on the part of the British Government, even though the enforcement of it may be long delayed. The result is not a question of power, for our power as compared with that of the Amir is overwhelming; it is merely a question

of time and convenience. *Second*, for any injury meanwhile suffered by individual Khyberis full compensation should of course be promptly given them. I should hardly think such individual injuries to be numerous, for I cannot think the Amir's authorities will find it in their interests to harass the Khyberis systematically, nor is it probable that they will venture far beyond Ali Musjid in any direction for that purpose.'

Amir's reply to the Viceroy, October 19

On October 19 the Nawab Ghulam Hasan returned from Kabul, bringing with him the reply of the Amir to the Viceroy's letter of August 14.

'From the Amir's answer to my letter announcing the mission,' writes Lord Lytton, 'which has now at last been received (and which, whilst expressing no desire and fixing no time to receive the mission, leaves wholly unnoticed the insult publicly offered to the British Government in the person of its Envoy), it is clear that, had we been content to await this answer at Peshawur, it would have left us precisely as we were two months before, and still obliged us either to go on waiting for further answers to further uninvited communications or else advance without permission and be repulsed. In the former case the mission must have been postponed till the spring, and during the whole of the present winter the only practical facts placed palpably before the eyes of all our Asiatic subjects and neighbours would have been the Amir's public alliance with Russia, his public hostility to us, and our publicly passive acceptation of both.'

The Amir's view of the British Government

The Viceroy at this time saw much of the Nawab, who had arrived from Kabul. According to him the Amir described the Viceroy as the mere servant of half a dozen Sahibs in London who constitute the

durbar of a woman, and are themselves practically the mere servants of a large number of small Sirdars who call themselves a Parliament, whereas, he added, 'I and the Czar of Russia are kings and can do what we like.'

Lord Lytton waited with the utmost anxiety the consent of the Government at home to commence military operations, for if our troops did not cross the border before the end of November, the passes would become impracticable for six months.

**Mr. Lyall urges immediate action**

Mr. (now Sir) Alfred Lyall was then Foreign Secretary. He wrote on this subject to the Viceroy with emphasis. 'The strongest motives for immediate action appear to be political, and these I think irresistible, so irresistible that I can hardly believe any natural impediments could possibly justify our deferring action until the spring. To sit idle on the threshold of Afghanistan until next spring would in my opinion be almost too ruinous a policy to be even mentioned; we should lose the tribes, lose our reputation, and give the Amir the immense prestige of having defied us for a whole season of campaigning. I cannot believe that the Cabinet would be even thinking of such a policy.'

The Government of India now asked the sanction of the Government at home to the following measures:

**Measures proposed by Indian Government**

1. The immediate issue of a manifesto defining our cause of offence, declaring our friendly disposition towards the Afghan people and our reluctance to interfere in their internal affairs, and fixing the sole responsibility on the Amir.

2. The immediate expulsion of the Amir's troops from the Khyber, and the permanent occupation of the entire pass up to Dakka.

3. The simultaneous occupation of the Kurum Valley far enough to threaten Kabul and Jellalabad in that direction also.

4. An advance from Quettah to the neighbourhood of Kandahar and the annihilation of any force the Amir can be tempted to oppose to us at that point.

**Opinion of Home Government**

The Government at home, however, did not consider that matters were ripe for taking all the above steps. They were of opinion that a *locus pœnitentiæ* should be allowed to the Amir; that, before crossing the frontier, a demand, in temperate language, should be made for an apology and acceptance of a permanent British mission within the Afghan territory; that a reply should be demanded within a time sufficient for the purpose; and that, meanwhile, the massing of troops should be continued.

Accordingly, on November 2 the following ultimatum, of which the terms were first approved by the Home Government, was delivered to Faiz Mahomed, at Ali Musjid, a duplicate being sent by post:

**Ultimatum sent to the Amir, November 2**

'I have received and read the letter which you have sent me by the hands of my Sirdar. It will be in your recollection that immediately on my arrival in India I proposed to send you a friendly mission, for the purpose of assuring you of the good will of the British Government, and of removing those past misunderstandings to which you have frequently alluded.

'After leaving this proposal long unanswered, you rejected it, on the grounds that you could not answer for the safety of any European Envoy in your country, and that the reception of a British mission might afford Russia a pretext for forcing you to receive a Russian mission. Such refusal to receive a friendly mission was contrary to the practice of allied

States, yet the British Government, unwilling to embarrass you, accepted your excuses.

Ultimatum to the Amir

'Nevertheless you have now received a Russian Envoy at your capital, at a time when a war was believed to be imminent in which England and Russia would have been arrayed on opposite sides, thereby not only acting in contradiction to the reasons asserted by you for not receiving a British mission, but giving to your conduct the appearance of being actuated by motives inimical to the British Government.

'In these circumstances the British Government, remembering its former friendship with your father and still desiring to maintain with you amicable relations, determined to send, after such delay as the domestic affliction you had suffered rendered fitting, a mission to you under the charge of Sir Neville Chamberlain, a trusted and distinguished officer of the Government who is personally known to you; the escort attached to his mission, not exceeding 200 men, was much less numerous than that which accompanied you into British territory, and was not more than was necessary for the dignity of my Envoy. Such missions are customary between friendly neighbouring States, and are never refused except when hostility is intended.

'I despatched, by a trusted messenger, a letter informing you that the mission credited to you was of a friendly character, that its business was urgent, and that it must proceed without delay.

'Nevertheless you, having received my letter, did not hesitate to instruct your authorities on the frontier to repel the mission by force. For this act of enmity and indignity to the Empress of India, in the person of her Envoy, your letter affords no

Ultimatum to the Amir

explanation or apology, nor does it contain any answer to my proposal for a full and frank understanding between our two Governments.

'In consequence of this hostile action on your part, I have assembled Her Majesty's forces on your frontier, but I desire to give you a last opportunity of averting the calamities of war.

'For this it is necessary that a full and suitable apology be offered by you in writing, and tendered on British territory by an officer of sufficient rank.

'Furthermore, as it has been found impossible to maintain satisfactory relations between the two States unless the British Government is adequately represented in Afghanistan, it will be necessary that you should consent to receive a permanent British mission within your territory.

'It is further essential that you should undertake that no injury shall be done to the tribes who acted as guides to my mission, and that reparation shall be made for any damage they have suffered from you; and if any injury be done by you to them, the British Government will at once take steps to protect them.

'Unless these conditions are accepted fully and plainly by you, and your acceptance received by me not later than November 20, I shall be compelled to consider your intentions as hostile, and to treat you as a declared enemy of the British Government.'[1]

On November 5 instructions were sent from England to the Viceroy to the effect that in the event of no answer, or an unfavourable answer, being received to the above message, the Amir must be treated as had been threatened, and that operations were to be commenced on November 21.

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

*To Viscount Cranbrook*

[*Private.*] 'Lahore: November 21, 1878.

'My dear Lord Cranbrook,—*Jacta est alea!* The Amir has not condescended to make any reply at all to our ultimatum. The latest hour fixed for the duration of the time within which his answer to it would be awaited, and if received considered, expired, strictly speaking, at sunset yesterday, the 20th. For the Mohammedan day ends at sundown. It was not, however, till 10 P.M. last night that I received from Peshawur, by telegraph, a message—which had been delayed in its transmission from Jamrud by the darkness and defective signalling—that no communication from the Amir had been received at our outposts. On receipt of this message, orders were issued to the generals commanding the Khyber,[1] Kurum,[2] and Quettah[3] columns to cross the frontier and advance at daybreak this morning. I have since heard from Peshawur of the commencement of operations in the Khyber, and probably before the mail leaves Lahore this evening I shall receive some further information as to their progress. Meanwhile the delay of the last month has not been wasted. For last night the negotiations in which I have employed it were satisfactorily closed by the signature of a written agreement between Major Cavagnari and the representatives of all the Khyber tribes, in which the tribes, detaching themselves from the Amir's authority, bind themselves to place the control of the pass under the management of the Government of India, on terms similar to those of the Mackeson Pass administration. The Mir Akhor has sent word to the Amir that, if the British forces

Military operations begun, November 21

Agreement with Khyber tribes

[1] Browne. [2] Roberts. [3] Biddulph.

move, his position in Ali Musjid will be untenable, and he and his whole garrison must be massacred unless promptly withdrawn or reinforced. But, so far as I can ascertain, the Amir has not made any response to this appeal.'

Viceroy's proclamation to people of Afghanistan

On the day that our troops crossed the frontier a proclamation was issued by the Viceroy to the Sirdars and people of Afghanistan, referring to the history of the past which had led to the present crisis, and declaring that the British Government had no quarrel and desired none with the Sirdars and people of Afghanistan, and that upon the Amir Sher Ali alone rested the responsibility of having exchanged the friendship for the hostility of the Empress of India.

The campaign is described in a despatch to the Secretary of State from which extracts are quoted:—

Viceroy's despatch, June 1879

'The force operating on the Khyber line was commanded by General Sir Samuel Browne; whose instructions were to capture Ali Musjid, expel the Amir's garrisons from the Khyber, and occupy Lundi Kotal, Dakka, or such other point as might be found most convenient at the head of the Pass. . . .' On the morning of November 21 he entered the Khyber and attacked the fort of Ali Musjid.

Taking of Ali Musjid

'The fire of the fort was well sustained and directed; and the defence made by the garrison of Ali Musjid for several hours was creditable to its spirit. But the position, having been turned during the night, was precipitately abandoned by the enemy with the loss of all his guns, stores and camp equipage. Several of the fugitives were captured by our troops, and the remainder were plundered and dispersed by the Afridis. Sir Samuel Browne met

with no further resistance on his march to Dakka, which he held unmolested for some weeks; but, this position being found inconvenient for the lengthened occupation of so large a force, the General pushed beyond it in the month of December, and occupied Jellalabad, without resistance; receiving there the unconditional submission of the local officials, and their request for British protection. No attempt was made by the Amir's army, at any subsequent period, to resist the advance of the British troops on this line of operations.'

Jellalabad occupied

In a private letter to Lord Cranbrook[1] the Viceroy tells how in the captured camp of Ali Musjid were found 'numerous proclamations by the Amir calling on all Mussulmans in our service to desert and oppose us in the cause of their religion. The prisoners taken in the Khyber had also each a small pocket Koran, with all the ferocious passages officially marked for their daily study by order of the Amir. The Afghan officer taken at Ali Musjid was by my orders sent to Lahore, where he is being very well cared for. Sir Neville Chamberlain interrogated him yesterday. He is very young—barely twenty years of age; says his regiment was entirely composed of boys, being one of four different regiments recently raised for the late heir-apparent, Abdullah Jan. He declares that the Amir's troops in the Khyber were nearly starved. Asked to what the sudden death of Abdullah Jan was commonly attributed in Afghanistan, he replied: "God's judgment on the Amir for forcing every youth in the country to do military service, to the great affliction of his parents." It is reported that most of the other Afghan officers who, escaping

Report of an Afghan prisoner

[1] December 12.

from Ali Musjid, returned to Kabul, have been blown away from guns by the Amir. Overtures from many quarters have already been made to Cavagnari for the deposition of Sher Ali. But I have warned him by telegraph to be most careful to discourage promptly all such suggestions, as I gather that it is the possible wish of Her Majesty's Government to come to terms with the Amir if possible.'

Despatch June, 1879

The line to which the Government attached most importance was that of the Kurum. 'The Amir,' wrote Lord Lytton, 'could scarcely fail to perceive that if he allowed a British force, advancing on this line, to reach the Shutargardan in full strength, both Kabul and Ghuzni would remain completely at its mercy. It was, therefore, probable that the strongest resistance to our advance would be made by His Highness at some point in the Upper Kurum Valley, where his troops would command positions of great strength, easy to hold, and very difficult to attack. It was equally probable that, if Sher Ali's army were thoroughly beaten here, its defeat would immediately be felt in the very heart of his power, which must be more severely shaken by the loss of a battle in the Kurum than by a similar disaster in any other part of his dominions. Our object, therefore, in despatching a force to the Kurum, was to defeat and disperse any Afghan army which might be found there, and to seize with the utmost rapidity a position directly menacing Kabul and Ghuzni, but without advancing beyond the Shutargardan. This force was entrusted to the command of General Roberts.'

On the same day that General Sir Samuel Browne entered the Khyber, General Roberts entered the Lower Kurum Valley, and occupied, without

opposition, the headquarters of the district, replacing the Amir's officials by his own. He found the people of this district willing to submit to his authority and furnish provisions for the supply of his troops. Continuing his advance into the Upper Kurum Valley, General Roberts there encountered a large Afghan force, established in a position of great strength, strongly armed with well-posted artillery, on the ridge of the Peiwar Khotal, which commands the valley on one side of it, and the road on the other, towards the Shutargardan.

Occupation of Kurum Valley

English readers are already familiar with the story of the engagement which then took place, but, for the sake of its great narrative interest, the following account may be quoted.

Account of the engagement in Upper Kurum Valley

'It was,' wrote Lord Roberts himself,[1] 'indeed a formidable position—a great deal more formidable than I had expected—on the summit of a mountain rising abruptly 2,000 feet above us, and only approachable by a narrow, steep and rugged path, flanked on either side by precipitous spurs jutting out like huge bastions, from which an overwhelming fire could be brought to bear on the assailants. The mountain on the enemy's right did not look much more promising for moving troops, and I could only hope that a way might be found on their left by which their flank could be turned. The country, however, in that direction was screened from view by spurs covered with dense forests of deodar.'

'The British force was now in a situation resembling that of Marmont's army at the foot of the Busaco heights, with the difference that Marmont had made his first attack and had failed utterly. Roberts sent out officers to explore the hills in search of a path by which the enemy's left might be turned

[1] *Forty-one Years in India*, vol. ii. p. 133.

and when, to his great relief, it was found, he made a night march through stony watercourses and over rough hills to another point upon the ridge occupied by the Afghans, whence he could outflank their defences.

'The track (for there was no road) led for two miles due east, and then, turning sharp to the north, entered a wide gorge and ran along the bed of a mountain stream. The moonlight lit up the cliffs on the eastern side of the ravine, but made the darkness only the more dense in the shadow of the steep hills on the west, underneath which our path lay, over piles of stones and heaps of glacier *débris*. A bitterly cold wind rushed down the gorge, extremely trying to all, lightly clad as we were in anticipation of the climb before us. Onwards and upwards we slowly toiled, stumbling over great boulders of rock, dropping into old water-channels, splashing through icy streams, and halting frequently to allow the troops in the rear to close up.'

'Just when everything depended on silence and secrecy two shots were fired by men of a Pathan company, whether through accident or as a warning to their Afghan countrymen has not been indubitably proved. The Sikhs whispered that there was treachery among the Mohammedans; the pickets in front might have taken alarm; yet there was no alternative to pushing on, and by good fortune Roberts surprised the enemy at the first streak of dawn. There was much trouble in bringing up the regiments before the Afghans could rally, for it is not easy to handle troops upon the rugged shoulder of a mountain range, among ravines and pine forests, at an altitude of 9,000 feet; and the nature of the ground can best be appreciated by reading Lord Roberts's description of it. But when the Afghans perceived that the English had

crossed the ridge at a point which threatened their retreat, they hastily evacuated a position of "enormous natural strength," abandoning guns, waggons, and baggage.'[1]

'The limit,' wrote Lord Lytton, 'assigned to the advance of our Kurum force was thus speedily reached and secured without further resistance.

Viceroy's Despatch, June 1879

'In the month of January 1879, General Roberts entered the adjoining valley of Khost, where he completely routed an assemblage of hostile tribes. But, as the permanent occupation of Khost formed no part of our political programme, this effectual chastisement of the inimical tribes, who had collected in that district, was promptly followed by the withdrawal of our troops after the accomplishment of the reconnaissance to which the movements of General Roberts were restricted by his original instructions.

'General Biddulph, entering Peshin on Nov. 26, found it already evacuated by the Amir's troops. The small, but important, district of Sibi, lying upon our line of communications close to the Belooch border, had, in the meanwhile, been occupied by a British detachment on the 23rd of the same month. Much political inconvenience had been caused by the interposition of this small Afghan district in the midst of Belooch territory, with which it is almost entirely surrounded; and we had, therefore, determined upon its permanent withdrawal from the jurisdiction of the Kabul authority. In December, General Stewart reached Peshin, and, assuming command of the Kandahar Expeditionary Force, crossed the Khojak Range with considerable difficulty, owing to the want of roads. On January 9 he entered

[1] Sir Alfred Lyall.

Viceroy's Despatch, June 1879

Surrender of Kandahar, January 9, 1879

Kandahar. The town surrendered quietly. On January 21, his cavalry had pushed as far as Khelat-i-Ghilzai, while Girishk, on the Helmund, was occupied by a force under General Biddulph. There was one cavalry skirmish at Taktapul on the road to Kandahar; and the marauding clans in this neighbourhood have given some trouble. But otherwise it may be said that Kandahar and all the adjacent districts passed into our hands without resistance, and with little or no appearance of national resentment at their occupation by British troops.

'Thus, within two days after the declaration of hostilities, the affront received by Sir Neville Chamberlain's mission at Ali Musjid was appropriately avenged on the spot where it had been offered. Within two weeks after the same date, the passes of the Khyber and the Kurum were completely in our hands, and the Amir's troops swept clean beyond the range of our operations. Not long afterwards, Jellalabad and Kandahar were occupied without resistance; and before the end of January (that is to say, in less than three months from the commencement of the campaign) the greater part of Southern Afghanistan, from the Helmund to Khelat-i-Ghilzai, had passed into the possession of the British Government. The rapid success of our military operations completely confirmed the calculations on which they had been based. The Amir's standing army was defeated and dispersed beyond all possibility of recovery; yet not a single one of his Sirdars or subjects had risen to the rescue of his power. His towns opened their gates without remonstrance to our summons; their authorities readily responded to our requirements; and their inhabitants evinced no disposition to forfeit the

Success of military operations

pecuniary advantages they derived from the presence of our troops. Nor was the neutrality of the independent tribes less satisfactory than the indifference of the Afghan people. From these tribes our convoys and outposts, especially along the Khyber Pass, were exposed to occasional annoyance: but, generally speaking, all the long lines of communication between our advanced positions and their bases in British India were far more facilitated by the friendly co-operation, than impeded by the occasional thefts and assaults, of the tribes along the tracts they traversed. Three years ago no European British subject could approach the Khyber Pass without serious personal danger. But, during the greater part of the recent campaign, telegraphic communication from Peshawur to Jellalabad was maintained along the entire length of this Pass with but little trouble and few interruptions.

Viceroy's Despatch, June '79

'In the meanwhile the anticipations of the Government as to the probable political effects of successful military operations on the Kurum line had been justified with startling rapidity and completeness.'

On November 30, a messenger from the Amir arrived at Ali Musjid and delivered a letter from the Amir in reply to the Viceroy's ultimatum. It was reported that the letter, dated the 19th, had been brought as far as Bosawal (on the road from Kabul to Jellalabad), when the bearer, hearing of the fall of Ali Musjid and the dispersion of the Amir's force in the Khyber, had returned with the letter to Kabul. The Amir was very angry with him for bringing back the letter, which he then dispatched to the care of his postmaster at Jellalabad with instructions to forward it to our outposts. Major Cavagnari had the impression that the letter finally

The Amir's reply to the Viceroy's ultimatum

received by him had been written by the Amir subsequent to his knowledge of the fall of Ali Musjid, and in substitution of the original letter given to the messenger, which had been written in a haughtier tone. The letter as it was received, however, was a virtual rejection of all the three conditions specified in the ultimatum. It contained no apology for the affront given to the mission of Sir Neville Chamberlain. With regard to the question of a permanent British mission the Amir gave a grudging consent to a temporary British mission, the numbers of which should be dictated by himself, and he did not undertake to abstain from injuring the Khyberis who had been friendly to us, but alluded to this condition in terms of complaint and criticism.

The letter was regarded by the Home Government as evading all the requirements of the Viceroy's letter to him, and as impossible of acceptance even if it had been received before November 20. The Viceroy was accordingly authorised, if a suitable opportunity occurred, to reply to the following effect: That the British Government had every desire to be on terms of peace and intimate friendship with the Government and people of Afghanistan, but that there could be no cessation of hostilities or negotiation for terms of peace until a clear and unequivocal submission was tendered by the Amir. The military operations already begun were not interrupted.[1]

On December 19 the Viceroy moved from Lahore to Calcutta. It was there that he heard of the flight of Sher Ali, and the release by him of his imprisoned son, Yakub Khan.

Writing on the 24th Lord Lytton says: 'My

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

latest information received, three days ago, on my way is that on receipt at Kabul of the news of General Roberts's victory at the Peiwar Khotal, the Amir's authority instantly collapsed, and the remainder of his army began to desert *en masse*. Thereupon he apparently decided to release Yakub Khan ("that ill-starred wretch," as he calls him in his last letter) and to fly into Russian territory, in company of the three remaining officers of Stoletoff's mission. With this information a pensioned Ressaldar has reached Jellalabad, now in our hands. The Ressaldar had been furnished by the Amir with a letter stating that, on the advice of his Sirdars, he (Sher Ali) was proceeding to St. Petersburg to lay his case before "Congress"! and that any communication we might desire to address to him would be considered there (at St. Petersburg) . . . The Ressaldar adds that he asked Yakub also to give him a letter, but that Yakub replied, "The letter given you by my father will suffice."' Flight of Sher Ali, December 1

Between the time when General Stoletoff left Kabul in the middle of August and the flight of the unfortunate Amir after the fall of Ali Musjid and the storming of the Peiwar Khotal in December, the correspondence between Afghanistan and the Russian authorities had been constant.

Soon after leaving Kabul, Stoletoff wrote from Tashkend to the Amir's foreign minister a letter designed to strengthen the Amir's resolution to hold out against British influence: 'I hope that those who want to enter the gate of Kabul from the east will see that the door is closed, then please God they will tremble.' In October he wrote again, asserting that he was 'busy day and night' in the Amir's affairs, and that his 'labours were not without result.' 'The

great Emperor is a true friend of the Amir's and of Afghanistan, and His Majesty will do whatever he may think necessary.'

Sher Ali himself wrote to General Kaufmann after the refusal of passage to Sir Neville Chamberlain's mission, asking for Russian help in the approaching crisis. With this letter was enclosed one to the Czar appealing for 'friendly assistance.'

The Russians refuse to help Sher Ali

These letters were acknowledged on November 4 by General Kaufmann in a spirit which must have caused Sher Ali bitter disappointment. He had heard that the English wanted to come to terms, and he advised the Amir as a friend to make peace with them.

Letter from General Kaufmann, November 26

On November 26 General Kaufmann wrote to the Russian General Razgonoff at Kabul: 'The Amir knows perfectly well that it is impossible for me to assist him with troops in winter, therefore it is necessary that war should not be commenced at this unseasonable time. If the English, in spite of the Amir's exertions to avoid the war, commence it, you must then take leave of the Amir and start for Tashkend, because your presence in Afghanistan in winter is useless. Moreover at such a juncture as the commencement of war with Afghanistan you ought to come here and explain the whole thing to me, so that I may communicate it to the Emperor. This will be of great benefit to Afghanistan and Russia.'

Amir to General Kaufmann

On December 8 the Amir addressed to General Kaufmann a renewed appeal on the ground 'of the old friendship, *and the recent alliance concluded through General Stoletoff on the part of His Imperial Majesty*. . . . Should any harm or injury, which God forbid, befall the Afghan Government, the dust of blame will certainly settle on the skirt of His

Imperial Majesty's Government.' A simultaneous letter was sent to Mirza Muhammad Hassan Khan, who had been deputed with General Stoletoff, in which the Amir begged that 32,000 troops of Tashkend should be sent to Afghan Turkestan, troops 'which General Stoletoff told me in your presence were ready and would be despatched whenever I required them.'

Amir to General Kaufmann

Before leaving Kabul, on December 13, the Amir addressed a letter to the officers of the British Government in which he informed them that he departed with a few attendants to lay the whole history of the transactions with the British Government before the Czar of Russia at St. Petersburg.

The Amir's firman to his subjects

He also proclaimed the cause and purpose of his departure to his own subjects in a firman dated December 22, addressed to the Governor of Herat and other notables there: 'We have received,' said the Amir in his firman, 'letters from the Governor-General and from General Stoletoff, who, being with the Emperor at Livadia, writes to us as follows: "The Emperor considers you as a brother, and you also, who are on the other side of the water (that is to say the Oxus), must display the same sense of friendship and brotherhood. The English Government is anxious to come to terms with you through the intervention of the Sultan, and wishes you to take his advice and counsel. But the Emperor's desire is that you should not admit the English into your country; and, like last year, you are to treat them with deceit and deception until the present cold season passes away; then the will of the Almighty will be made manifest to you—that is to say, the Russian Government having repeated the Bismillah, the Bismillah will come to your assistance."'

Lord Lytton's comments on the firman

Lord Lytton comments upon this document: 'I have seen the letter from General Stoletoff to which this firman refers. I have read it not once or twice only, but several times, with the greatest of care; and, incredible as it must seem, I am bound to say that the firman accurately reproduces the substance of it, though the firman does not do full justice to its remarkable phraseology. I distinctly remember the advice given in that letter by General Stoletoff to Sher Ali, and it was this. That Sher Ali should, if possible, incite to rebellion against the Queen's authority Her Majesty's subjects on the other side of the Indus; but that, if he were unable to do this, then he should send to the Government of India an emissary possessing the tongue of a serpent and full of deceit, who might with sweet words perplex our minds and induce us to suspend hostilities till the spring, as Russia could not send troops into Afghanistan during the winter. The firman, therefore, is a true statement. But, if it be a true statement, what then is the true meaning of its allusion to "last year"? "Like last year, you are to treat them with deceit and deception until the present cold season passes away." What does this mean? Why, it can have but one meaning, and that meaning is plain. It means this. "The advice we give you now is the same as the advice we gave you last year, and on which you then acted so successfully at the Peshawur Conference. You must do now what you did then—engage the British Government in a deceptive and abortive negotiation in order to gain time."'

Recapitulating the conclusions which the evidence of Russian intrigue with Afghanistan had left on his mind Lord Lytton says, 'I affirm that Russian interference in Afghan affairs did not commence with the

Russian mission to Kabul, and that it did not cease with the withdrawal of that mission. I affirm that Sher Ali had ceased to be the friend and ally of the British Government, and that for all practical purposes he had become the friend and ally of the Russian Government, at least three years before I had any dealings with His Highness or any connection with the Government of India. And, finally, I affirm that the real and the only cause of the Afghan war was an intrigue of long duration between Sher Ali and the Russian authorities in Central Asia, an intrigue leading to an alliance between them for objects which, if successfully carried out, would have broken to pieces the empire of British India.'

# CHAPTER VIII

## HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH YAKUB KHAN. KABUL MASSACRE. WAR OF 1879

THE situation of affairs, military and political, at the beginning of the year 1879 was uncertain and obviously inconclusive. The Amir, Sher Ali, had fled across the Oxus into Russian territory, where the Russian Government found his presence embarrassing, and where he received from General Kaufmann a series of letters which must have finally dispelled any hope he may still have retained of receiving Russian aid. He was dissuaded from continuing his journey to St. Petersburg, and advised to make friends with the English and return to his own kingdom. His unhappy life, however, was drawing to a close. He never left Mazar-i-sharif, and died there on February 21.

Death of Sher Ali, February 21, 1879

In the meantime the English armies were stationary at the points up to which they had advanced, at or near Jellalabad on the line towards Kabul; on the Shutargardan; and at Kandahar. To push on further into the interior of Afghanistan would have necessitated the occupation of a wider area than was necessary for the policy that the Viceroy had now adopted under instructions from the Government at home, with which, on the whole, he concurred. His personal opinion inclined towards the expediency of disintegrating Afghanistan; but he was aware of

the grave reasons that existed for terminating the war speedily, and he was willing to persevere in attempting to carry out the established programme of maintaining a strong independent kingdom. In writing on the subject to Lord Cranbrook he noticed, however, one argument against this policy, which may here be mentioned in his own words, because it has even now force and applicability:

Objections to independence of Afghanistan

'The primary condition of a strong independent Afghanistan is a strong independent Afghan ruler. Granting a perennial supply of such rulers, it is improbable that an energetic, able, Asiatic prince of independent character will be free from ambition. The ambition common to all energetic Asiatic princes is of a military, territorial, and not very scrupulous character. Would the aspirations of such a ruler be in harmony with the necessarily conservative character of our own position and policy in the East? Would he not always be a disturbing element? Would not Afghanistan, administered by such a ruler, tend more and more to become a military State, held together by armed power? Would not the ambitious, energetic, and not over-scrupulous ruler of such a military State find, in the long run, his best account in alliance with the ambitious, energetic, and not over-scrupulous Government of such a military empire as Russia, rather than in alliance with a Power so essentially pacific and sensitively scrupulous as our own.'[1]

Lord Lytton nevertheless spared no pains in directing all his efforts towards reconstituting the country under some successor of Sher Ali upon the plan which he described in another letter:

'First,' he said, 'we want to effect a permanent

[1] To Lord Cranbrook, January 10, 1879.

Conditions on which relations with Afghanistan may be safely established

settlement of our relations with Afghanistan on such conditions as will adequately secure the three main objects of the war, namely (*a*) the punishment of Sher Ali, (*b*) the permanent improvement of our present frontier, and (*c*) the establishment of paramount political influence over all the Afghan territories and tribes between our present frontier and the Oxus. Secondly, we want to do this as speedily as we possibly can, so as to avoid the indefinite prolongation, and possible extension, of hostilities, with all their attendant military risks, political embarrassments, and financial difficulties.' . . . 'But,' he added, 'we cannot close the Afghan War satisfactorily, or finally, without an Afghan Treaty; we cannot get an Afghan Treaty without an Afghan Government willing to sign, and fairly able to maintain it. It is only, therefore, in the early establishment of such a Government that we can find a satisfactory solution to our present difficulties. Its early establishment mainly depends on our own policy; and we must, I think, be prepared to do whatever may be necessary on our part to promote and maintain the existence of such a Government at Kabul.' [1]

The Viceroy's main object, therefore, was to find some capable ruler with whom he might treat. The heir-apparent to Sher Ali's kingdom was his son Yakub Khan, who had as yet made no reply to some tentative overtures from the British Government; he naturally assumed so long as his father was alive an attitude of hostility towards the English invaders, and his power to conciliate the powerful Afghan tribes and to establish his authority was at the time exceedingly questionable. Under these circumstances his abdication and flight seemed for the moment not

[1] January 30. 1879.

improbable; and Lord Lytton contemplated, in such a contingency, the alternative of opening correspondence with Wali Mahomed Khan, brother of Sher Ali, who was supposed to be a man of personal influence and capacity. It was hardly to be expected, however, that Wali Mahomed, as the English nominee, could be strong enough to bring back under his authority at Kabul either Herat or Kandahar, and in submitting this project to the Secretary of State, by whom it was provisionally approved, Lord Lytton warned the Ministry that it might lead to the disintegration of Afghanistan. But before any step had been taken to act upon this alternative, it was thrown aside upon the receipt by Major Cavagnari of letters in which Yakub Khan acknowledged and amicably responded to the overtures that had been made to him, and announced his father's death in the following terms:

Letter from Yakub Khan announcing the death of Sher Ali

'I write in accordance with former friendship, to inform you that to-day, Wednesday the 4th of Rabi-ul-awal (February 26, 1879), a letter was received by post from Turkestan announcing that my worthy and exalted father had, upon Friday, 29 Safar, obeyed the call of the Summoner, and throwing off the dress of existence, hastened to the region of the divine mercy. Since every living being must relinquish the robe of life, and must drink the draught of death, I remain resigned and patient under this heavy calamity and misfortune. As my exalted father was an ancient friend of the illustrious British Government, I have out of friendship sent you this intimation.'[1]

This letter was suitably acknowledged, 'and Major Cavagnari was authorised to communicate

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

the conditions on which the British Government were willing to make peace.

These conditions the Viceroy had borne in mind from the beginning of the campaign, and as soon as the flight of Sher Ali had left Yakub Khan in possession of the throne of Kabul, Lord Lytton had referred them to the Secretary of State as the basis of a treaty of peace, should Yakub Khan make any advances in the direction of a settlement with the British Government. 'Were negotiations opened with Yakub,' he wrote on December 24, 1878, 'I would offer to restore Kandahar at once, and eventually Jellalabad, on condition of a Treaty giving formal recognition to the permanent withdrawal from the Kabul authority of Peshin and Sibi, which I would give to Khelat, the Kurum, the Khyber and all the Mohammedan and Shinwari tribes of the other passes debouching about Dakka. The Peshin Valley is important, because it is the great granary of Quettah, and also because it commands the Khojak and is the debouch of the Thull Chetiali, the best alternative route to Quettah. The Khyber we are pledged to retain, and its importance is obvious. But the tribes would remain independent, our relations to them being similar to those we now hold with the other tribes along the Derajat. The Peiwar Khotal is of supreme importance, commanding, as it does, the approaches to Kabul, Jellalabad, and Ghuzni, and in my opinion it should never pass out of our hands. These territorial arrangements (which would add nothing to actual British territory), coupled with the admission of British and the exclusion of foreign agents, would I think suffice for a satisfactory settlement.' It was on these lines that Major Cavagnari was authorised to treat with Yakub Khan in January 1879.

Terms of peace offered to Yakub Khan

To the territorial condition Yakub demurred: 'As this is beyond the strength and capacity of the officers of this God-granted Government and is opposed to magnanimity and friendship, you should out of magnanimity and friendship depart from this condition and relinquish the territories of the Afghan State which you have taken possession of recently; you should positively not interfere with them.'[1]

Yakub's reply

To the condition of British control of his foreign relations he submitted willingly.

On the question of British agents he replied: 'In the event of strong and firm friendship and harmony always existing between the Government of Afghanistan and the British Government, the Afghan Government out of friendship agrees that, in accordance with the desire of the British Government, several officers of rank, with a proper escort, should reside on the part of the British Government in the capital only, which is Kabul, but they must not interfere in any of the affairs of Afghanistan. This to last until such time as the British Government obtains complete confidence in the constancy and faithful friendship of the Afghan Government. After that they have the right either to withdraw the officers, or appoint them permanently, whichever they choose.'[2]

It will be observed that while Yakub Khan made strenuous objection to the cession of any Afghan territory, he assented at once to the demand, which his father had at all costs resisted, that he should receive British agents within his dominions, stipulating only that their place of residence should be Kabul. Herein, as it appeared from subsequent information, he acted upon the advice of his councillors,

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.* [2] *Ibid.*

who argued that territory once ceded could never be recovered, whereas the residence of a British Envoy at his capital might be temporary, and terminable by a change of policy or circumstances. But Yakub Khan's prompt acceptance of a condition of peace which contained one of the main causes and objects of the war may be now thought to have inspired the Indian Government with too much confidence in his power to observe it, and to have withdrawn in some degree their attention from the inevitable risks which surrounded the position of an Envoy at the capital of an Amir whose authority could at first be only unstable and precarious, in the midst of an armed population unsettled and irritated by foreign invasion.

The territorial cessions, however, were held by the Viceroy to be essential to the conclusion of any treaty, and by his instruction Major Cavagnari proceeded to insist upon them. In his reply to Yakub Khan, after stating that his letter had been transmitted to the Viceroy, our representative added that he regretted to find His Highness, having accepted two of the preliminary conditions, had substituted for the third a proposal which his Government was not likely to accept. This letter was sent by the hand of Bukhtiar Khan, who was instructed if possible to obtain from Yakub a written invitation to Cavagnari to come to Kabul and explain the situation. As soon as this letter was despatched Major Cavagnari repaired to Lahore to meet the Viceroy, and discuss with him what language he should hold to Yakub should the meeting take place.

**Yakub Khan invites Cavagnari to Kabul, March 29**

Yakub Khan's answer to Major Cavagnari's letter, dated March 29, contained the desired invitation to the British Envoy to go to Kabul, that 'the real

concord on both sides might be declared and proved face to face,' but he still held out on the question of ceding territory.

On April 9 Major Cavagnari replied that the British Government would appoint a mission of rank to proceed to Kabul, with a suitable escort, on receipt of information from the Amir that the necessary arrangements for its journey and reception had been made.

In anticipation of the negotiations, the question of terms was again discussed between the Government of India and the Government at home. On April 4 the Viceroy telegraphed that, before Yakub Khan accepted in full the bases, he would almost certainly stipulate for protection and guarantee of his territory as the treaty would leave it, and would probably ask for recognition of his heir when declared, and that, if absolutely necessary for success, it was proposed to make the concessions which Sir Neville Chamberlain had been authorised to offer to Sher Ali.

The Secretary of State replied, next day, that Sir Neville Chamberlain's terms were never accepted by the Cabinet nor communicated to the Amir; that circumstances had entirely changed, and that we had protected ourselves; that the Government agreed to a subsidy and qualified recognition of Yakub's heir, but that they were entirely adverse to any guarantee of Afghan territory.[1]

On April 6, the Viceroy telegraphed to the Secretary of State as follows:

Terms of treaty with Yakub Khan

'Please telegraph views of Cabinet on following substance of treaty to be negotiated with Yakub. First two articles formal. Third, amnesty for assis-

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

tance to us during the war. Fourth, Amir agrees to conduct his foreign relations in accordance with advice and wish of British Government, will enter into no engagements or war with foreign States without concurrence of British Government. Fifth, qualified recognition of heir. Sixth, permanent British Resident at Kabul (according to Yakub's suggestion) and right to depute agents to Herat and other frontier places. Seventh, their safety and honourable treatment guaranteed by Amir. Eighth, right to garrison Herat whenever we deem it necessary for frontier protection. Ninth and tenth, commercial facilities, protection of traffic, adjustment of duties, selection of open routes. Eleventh, telegraph line. Twelfth, restoration of Kabul territory now in our possession excepting Kurum, Pishin, and Sibi, as in draft proclamation. Amir renounces authority over tribes and passes mentioned in proclamation. Thirteenth, secures payment by Amir of customary allowances to certain special Sirdars. Fourteenth, subsidy to Amir, amount not yet settled.'

All the foregoing articles were approved by the Cabinet except the eighth as to Herat, the prudence of which was questioned; on the other hand, the inclusion of power to occupy Kandahar was suggested.

The Viceroy continued to urge, with regard to the fourth article, that if the Amir was willing to place his foreign relations entirely in our hands he should in return be guaranteed protection from foreign aggression.

To Lord Cranbrook, April 10, 1879

'If there is to be permanent peace and mutual confidence between native States, it must be on some fair basis of give and take, which does not leave all the advantages wholly on one side, especially if that

side be the side of the stronger power. . . . The increasingly bold and frequent attacks on our communications and outposts, to which we are already exposed by the suspension of our advance; the growing impression that we shall in no circumstances venture to advance further, and the continued uncertainty of our future relations with Yakub Khan, are significant warnings of what would certainly happen if we leave in power at Kabul a Prince unreconciled to the results of the war. . . . Our chief difficulties with the late Amir were due to the inopportune ambiguity and reserve of the language held to him by previous administrations on the subject of guarantees. But for such ambiguity there was then, at least, an excuse which no longer exists. The British Government might with some reason hesitate to guarantee frankly and boldly against foreign aggression a State over whose foreign relations it has practically no control. But Yakub has already agreed to place his foreign relations unreservedly in our hands, and the territorial results of the war will have given us an effectual material guarantee for the due fulfilment of this engagement.'

To Lord Cranbrook, April 10

The telegrams which preceded the arrival of this letter produced their effect, and on April 13 the following telegram was received from the Secretary of State:

'If Yakub faithfully conducts his foreign policy under our direction, we shall be prepared to support him against any foreign aggression which may result from such conduct with money, arms, and troops, to be employed at our discretion, when and where we think fit.'

Telegram from Secretary of State, April 13

On April 21 the Viceroy writes: 'Yakub Khan

To Lord Cranbrook April 21

is hanging fire rather vexatiously. Bukhtiar Khan reports that His Highness makes great difficulties about Cavagnari's reception at Kabul, and that the batch of councillors whom he lately summoned from Herat are urging him not to make peace with us on any terms but those of a reversion to the *status quo ante*. All this is quite possible; and if, failing a satisfactory settlement with Yakub, we do not march to Kabul, the bad effect of our inaction in such circumstances will, I am persuaded, destroy all the good effect of our action thus far. I do not, however, at all despair of a satisfactory settlement with Yakub; and my impression is that Bukhtiar is exaggerating the difficulties of it *pour se faire valoir*.'

The continued inactivity of the British force upon the Khyber line produced restlessness and hostile combinations among the tribes. Letters, moreover, were intercepted from Yakub, inciting the tribesmen to attack us and promising them support. Partly on these grounds, and partly for sanitary reasons, it was decided to advance a portion of the force from Jellalabad to the higher ground of Gundamuk on the Kabul road. That place was occupied about April 14.

On April 24, Bukhtiar Khan, whose reports from Kabul had been discouraging, returned to the British camp. He brought with him two letters dated April 20 from Yakub Khan to Major Cavagnari. One of these was merely formal. The other announced the Amir's intention to proceed himself to the British camp.

According to the Munshi, Yakub feared to receive a British mission lest it should undermine his authority at Kabul, and so compel him to accept such conditions as the British Government might choose

to dictate. There was, moreover, a strong military party at Kabul averse to peace, and it was doubtful whether Yakub would be able to protect the mission from insult; even when Bukhtiar Khan arrived at Kabul, a hostile crowd assembled and urged a holy war.

The reception of Yakub in the British camp being considered in all respects a preferable arrangement to the deputation of a British mission to Kabul, as had been proposed, assurances were at once (April 25) sent to the Amir, promising the most honourable treatment for himself, escort, and retinue during such period as he might remain the guest of the British Government.

This time Bukhtiar Khan was received with great honour and cordiality at Kabul, and the Amir himself left his capital on May 3 and arrived at Gundamuk on the 8th. He had a following of about 400 persons, and was accompanied by eight notables, amongst them the Mustaufi and General Daod Shah, who were to be taken into council, the chief place being given to the former.

Yakub Khan comes to Gundamuk, May 8

On May 10 Major Cavagnari had his first interview with the Amir, only Mr. W. Jenkins being present as secretary and interpreter. The discussions on the essential points of the treaty continued until May 17. The Amir was very unwilling to give way about retention or occupation of any part of Afghan territory, arguing that, because he had come to negotiate for peace, the British Government should revert to the *status quo ante bellum*, and trust entirely to his promise of friendship without requiring any material guarantee for good faith. At last, on May 17, after much fencing, he agreed to the management of the Michni and Khyber Passes by the British

Government, and that the districts of Pishin, Sibi, and Kurum should be treated as assigned to that Government, the surplus revenues, after deducting civil charges, being paid to the Amir of Kabul. In Kurum the Amir requested, as a personal favour, that the British administration might only extend to Ali Khel. This was agreed to under limitations deemed necessary to secure control over the Jaji tribe.'

On May 23, three days before the signing of the treaty, Major Cavagnari wrote to the Viceroy:

From Cavagnari, May 23

'Your Lordship will have learned from my late telegrams that negotiations with Yakub have taken a favourable turn. We shall get a satisfactory treaty out of him, and the future must decide what sort of an Amir he will turn out. I am inclined at times to believe that he is likely to submit to the influence of the British Resident at Kabul, but sometimes I fancy that his intellect is weak, and he certainly is of a changeable temperament. The Mustaufi has not a very high opinion of him, though he admits that he is the best of the Barakzai family. I have found the Mustaufi very well disposed towards us, but although he is in some respects a shrewd fellow, I can't say that he is very brilliant as regards intelligence. In fact, I found the whole lot to be pretty much of the ordinary Afghan stamp, and that avarice and suspicion were their leading qualities. Their arguments were so feeble and far from the point that I at once made up my mind to deal with the case as if it concerned an ordinary affair connected with border Pathan tribes. I accordingly arranged that I would visit the Amir or send for his ministers whenever I thought it necessary to do so, and that I would only have one formal meeting at which would be recorded the final

Cavagnari's impressions of Yakub

From Cavagnari, May 23

decision, whatever it should be. This has saved much time and unprofitable discussion, and I think the result will be as satisfactory as could have been brought about by any other means at our disposal. . . . Some of the (Amir's) proposals indicate such a want of knowledge of State business that it is impossible not to feel anxious about his ability to manage the affairs of his kingdom in future. For a few days I thought he was disposed to feel grateful for the lenient terms granted him, but the more I see of him the fainter becomes my hope that this idea will be realised. . . . The idea that prevailed in England that Yakub Khan is everything that could be desired has of course made me most anxious to bring about a settlement with him, and this I may almost say is an accomplished fact. But I hold to the opinion that I have always held, that our true policy is to see Afghanistan broken up into petty States. I told Yakub Khan that it would be owing to him that Afghanistan continued on the map, and that if anyone demanded from him what good he had gained by throwing himself into an alliance with the English, he could reply to the above effect.

'He has a very contemptuous opinion of Persia, and says that if England would permit him to do so he will attack Persia and annex the Khorassan province! . . .

'I doubt whether, even if he wished to do so, Yakub Khan could reach Kabul if he failed to arrange a settlement with us. This, however, he has from first to last stated that he will never do. His line has been that he will either return to Kabul with a settlement that will please his countrymen, or else that he will go to India as our pensioner.

'I have been able to ascertain that the reception

by the late Amir of Sir Neville Chamberlain's mission was more nearly coming off than many people are inclined to credit; especially those who asserted that it ought to have been well known that the mission would be rejected, or that with the foregone conclusion that this would be so it was persisted in.

'Sher Ali put the question to Stoletoff, who graphically and pointedly replied, "Two swords cannot go into one scabbard."'

Signing of the Treaty of Gundamuk, May 26

On May 26 the Treaty of Gundamuk was signed, it having been first explained to the Amir that the withdrawal of our troops from Kandahar and other points of Afghan territory to be evacuated could not, for sanitary reasons, be immediate, an intimation that was very distasteful to Yakub Khan, who stipulated that his governors should nevertheless be at once placed in charge of the administration, and that interference by British officers should be prohibited.

Telegraphic congratulations were exchanged between the Amir and the Viceroy on the signature of the Treaty. His Highness also, in a letter dated May 30, expressed his satisfaction with the treatment he had received at Gundamuk and his desire to visit the Viceroy, to which, however, he could not give immediate effect, owing to the heat, to the cholera, and to the anarchy in the interior of Afghanistan to which he must attend.[1]

On May 28 Cavagnari wrote to the Viceroy:—

'It was a great relief to me the being able to telegraph that the Treaty had been signed, for I never felt certain what any twenty-four hours might produce. . . .

'My task now is to endeavour to bring about a

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

From Cavagnari, May 28

satisfactory understanding with the Sirdars who are in our camp and the Amir. I am now reaping the benefit of not permitting more chiefs to openly commit themselves to our interests than was absolutely necessary for our immediate purposes. The consequence is that there are very few that I am concerned about. In the same way the not having interfered in revenue matters, and allowing things to continue as in the old régime, will now be an advantage to us, for as no change has been made there are no people howling at us for going back and leaving them once more to the mercies of the Durani Government. . . .

'In working matters at Kabul, the main object to achieve will be to convince Yakub Khan that he need have no suspicions about us. I have told him that our object is to make him strong, and that he never need fear that the British officers will be intriguing with disaffected Sirdars, &c., as this would be working in an opposite direction to that of our avowed object. Englishmen are no match for Asiatics in intrigue, and our only chance is by straightforward dealing, and in showing everyone that we consider Yakub Khan our friend and are prepared to meet him. Natives, of course, pronounce this to be a mistake, and say that we must keep up a faction in Afghanistan in order to retain a firm hold over the Amir. I doubt whether there would be much advantage in acting on this principle. We should endeavour to get on friendly footing with as many persons as possible, but so long as our alliance with the Amir lasts everyone should be openly and discreetly given to understand that we desire to see our ally's authority strengthened and consolidated, and not weakened by there being a faction throughout the country, whose opportunity for benefiting themselves depended on the rupture

From Cavagnari, May 28

of our friendly relations with the ruler. Should it unfortunately happen that Yakub Khan breaks his engagement at any future time, I don't think that the mere fact of our not having in the meantime kept up a faction ready for this contingency would ever be felt to be a disadvantage to us, for so long as we are believed to have wealth and strength on our side we shall always be able to count on having plenty of supporters. It is the knowledge that we possess this wealth and power that makes Afghans, especially, join us, and not that they have any feeling of friendship for us or any gratitude for past favours. Whether Yakub Khan can be made to appreciate and reciprocate the amount of confidence we may desire to place in him remains to be seen, but I believe the principle is one worth trying to establish, and I think there is a better chance of its success than may at first sight appear likely.'

The Amir left Gundamuk not apparently merely submissive but satisfied, trustful, and friendly.

Despatch on the Treaty of Gundamuk, July 7, 1879

'The several articles of this Treaty,' wrote the Viceroy, 'were framed in the belief that they fully secure all the objects of the war, which have already been explained. The 3rd Article establishes our exclusive influence throughout Afghanistan, and our paramount control over the Amir's external relations. Our obligation to assist His Highness against foreign aggression is the legitimate consequence of this condition; and it is required of us not less imperatively for the security of India than for the independence of Afghanistan. But the British Government could not have undertaken such an obligation if the means of fulfilling it had not been secured by the 4th Article of the Treaty, which provides for the residence at Kabul of a British representative, and for the right to

Despatch on the Treaty of Gundamuk, July 7, 1879

depute British agents, as occasion may require, to all parts of the Afghan frontier. The Amir himself had requested that our permanent representative should reside at his capital; and from the opening of the negotiations he has evinced no disinclination to the admission of British officers within his dominions. . . .

'Under the 6th and 7th Articles of the Treaty His Highness engages to take measures for the protection and encouragement of commerce between India and Afghanistan. . . . Afghanistan itself is a country of no great productive resources, but it commands the routes which penetrate into Central and Western Asia; and the commercial classes, not only of that country, but also of those immediately beyond the Upper Oxus, are largely Indian, or of Indian descent. The trade of Afghanistan is principally in Indian hands. . . . The route by Herat and Kandahar runs through the more open and fertile parts of Afghanistan, connecting the important towns of Herat and Kandahar. The treaty signed with His Highness the Khan of Khelat towards the close of the year 1876 effected the pacification of Beloochistan, and re-opened the great trade route through the Bolan Pass, which has not since been interrupted. By that arrangement the commerce of Central Asia, after reaching Kandahar, is already placed in safe connection with the railway system of India and the rising sea-port of Kurrachi. There is already a noticeable tendency to increase in the number of *kafilas* now annually passing the Bolan; and the merchants of Sindh have always been among the most industrious and enterprising of our foreign traders. With proper management, therefore, and under a judicious system of transit duties, con-

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siderable expansion may be reasonably expected in the external commerce of India upon this important line.

'The territorial concessions imposed upon the Amir by the Treaty of Gundamuk are light, and involve no permanent alienation of any part of the dominions claimed by his Government. The Khyber Pass has never formed part of those dominions; while the districts of Pishin, Sibi, and Kurum are retained by the British Government under an assignment. For the better protection and security of our frontier, and for the proper maintenance of communications with our advanced garrisons, which will observe and command the three principal passes into India, it was essential that these three districts should remain in our hands. But we have entertained no projects for establishing ourselves permanently in the interior of the country, or for occupying any posts not absolutely required for the defensive purposes explained. . . . Accordingly the towns of Kandahar and Jellalabad are restored by the Treaty of Gundamuk to the Amir of Kabul. . . .

'The engagements thus concluded, at Gundamuk, with the Amir Yakub Khan represent and attest an important change in the whole condition of Central Asian affairs. The magnitude of this change will be best appreciated when our present position and influence beyond the frontier are compared with what they were during the greater portion of the preceding period between the Umballa Conferences and the recent Afghan War. We do not, however, profess to ascribe any talismanic virtue to written engagements on the part of Afghan princes. The late Amir Sher Ali, throughout the whole period of his reign, was under a formal treaty obligation to be the friend of the

Despatch on the Treaty of Gundamuk, July 7, 1879

friends, and the enemy of the enemies, of the British Government; but that engagement in no wise prevented his adoption of a course which led him into inevitable rupture and open hostility with this Government. We regard the present Treaty rather as the commencement, than as the confirmation, of a new and better era in our relations with Afghanistan. It provides for, and facilitates, the attainment of results incalculably beneficial to the two countries concerned. The character of those results, however, will, to a great extent, be determined by the steadiness with which the British Government maintains, and the intelligence with which its local agents carry out, the policy that has dictated this Treaty: a policy which has for its object to substitute co-operation for isolation, and to replace mutual mistrust by mutual confidence. Nor do we disguise from ourselves that the practical value of the Treaty mainly depends on the character and disposition of the Amir and his successors. Relations established with Afghanistan under the most favourable conditions, and with the most promising prospects, may, of course, be again impaired either by the disloyalty of Afghan princes or by the alienation of their unrequited confidence. In either case complications may arise against which no present precautions on our part can completely guarantee our successors in the Government of India. But, though anxious to deal considerately with the Amir's susceptibilities, and to take into the fullest account all the reasonable requirements and legitimate interests of his Government, we deem it absolutely requisite that, in countries like Afghanistan, the power of the British Government to punish its enemies and protect its friends should be so generally recognised as to

Despatch on the Treaty of Gundamuk, July 7, 1879

render unnecessary the frequent assertion of it. We have, therefore, been careful to secure, for British interests and influence in Afghanistan, a position substantially independent of the personal caprices of any Afghan ruler; and for the effectual maintenance of that position the Treaty provides strong material guarantees, by the territorial conditions which place the British Power in permanent command of the main avenues from India to Kabul.'

Some military authorities regretted that the territorial conditions of the Treaty had not included the occupation of Kandahar and Jellalabad. The Viceroy, however, considered that the means had been secured for occupying these places without difficulty at any moment that it might seem to be necessary, since from the Khojak range beyond Quettah we were within striking distance of Kandahar; while the Kurum Valley up to the Shutargardan Pass brought us far on our route towards Kabul, and the direct line through Jellalabad was held by our possession of the Khyber Pass and its eastern outlet at Lundi Kotal.

General Stewart warmly advocated the abandonment of Kandahar, as did also Major Sandeman, our political agent at Quettah. According to the arrangements, however, made with the Amir, our troops were to remain at Kandahar till the autumn.

From Lord Salisbury, May 23

Lord Salisbury, writing on May 23 to the Viceroy, said: 'I cannot allow the conclusion of this affair to pass without warmly congratulating you on the great success you have achieved and the brilliant qualities you have displayed. To my eyes the wise constraint in which you have held the eager spirits about you is not the least striking of your victories. . . . The great military success has done us yeoman's

service in negotiating with Russia; and I hope that the moderation of your terms will be of no small utility at Constantinople.'

The approval of the Prime Minister was not less warmly expressed. Lord Beaconsfield wrote at the close of the parliamentary session this year: 'I write to you now at the end of a long and laborious campaign, which has terminated triumphantly for Her Majesty's Government. It is not merely that our external affairs figure well in the Queen's Speech, that not a single Russian soldier remains in the Sultan's dominions, that, greatly owing to your energy and foresight, we have secured a scientific and adequate frontier for our Indian Empire, and that our South African anxieties are virtually closed; but we have succeeded in passing some domestic measures in spite of factious obstruction of first-class interest and importance—notably our Army Discipline Act, a measure of magnitude and gravity equal in range to these great measures, and our Irish University Act, a question which had upset two administrations. Although we had entered "the sixth year of our reign," our parliamentary majority, instead of diminishing, has increased, and, notwithstanding the rumours which may reach you, I see no reason, scarcely a right, to dissolve Parliament, though this, of course, must depend on circumstances.

From Lord Beaconsfield, August 14

'. . . Whatever happens it will always be to me a source of real satisfaction that I had the opportunity of placing you on the throne of the Great Mogul.'

This letter affords a curious illustration of the instability of Oriental politics and of Parliamentary Governments. Before it reached Lord Lytton the whole framework of the political settlement of

Afghanistan, as ratified by the Gundamuk Treaty, had been dislocated by the massacre of Cavagnari, his staff and escort; and six months later the majority in the House of Commons had been transferred from the Conservative to the Liberal party, who came into office upon a triumphant denunciation of Lord Beaconsfield's entire foreign policy, particularly in Turkey and Afghanistan.

**Approval of the Home Government, August 7**

The despatch from the Government of India on the terms of the Gundamuk Treaty was acknowledged by the Secretary of State on August 7, 1879. Her Majesty's Government cordially approved the whole convention, with especial advertence to the clause providing for a British Resident at Kabul, as an important point of policy that had been finally gained, and as a measure full of promise for the consolidation of friendship between the two countries.

Acknowledgment having been made of the loyalty manifested by the native princes of India throughout the crisis, of the valuable aid rendered by the Khan of Khelat, and of the services of the various political officers, and of Major Cavagnari and Major Sandeman in particular, the despatch ended in these words:

'I have only, in conclusion, to express the deep interest with which Her Majesty's Government have perused the clear and able exposition of the policy of the Government of India in connection with recent Afghan affairs which is contained in your letter, No. 160, of July 7, and their cordial approval of the proceedings of your Excellency in Council throughout the critical period which is now closed. In carrying out, from time to time, their wishes and instructions, your Excellency and your colleagues have displayed uniform discretion and judgment, and

an accurate appreciation of the object essential to be attained. Her Majesty's Government confidently believe that the policy embodied in the Treaty of Gundamuk, to which your Excellency personally has so eminently contributed, will, if pursued consistently, secure both British and Afghan interests, and promote the stability and peace of the Empire.'

From Secretary of State, August 7

The policy of the Indian Government was warmly supported by the Government at home, not only in private letters and despatches, but also on the public platform and in the House of Commons.

As soon as the Treaty of Gundamuk was concluded, the Amir Yakub Khan returned to Kabul, there to prepare for the reception of the British Envoy, while Major, now Sir Louis, Cavagnari, who had been appointed as Her Majesty's 'Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary' at the Court of Kabul, joined the Viceroy at Simla, there to confer with him as to the character and functions of the mission.

The following letter to Lord Cranbrook shows how confidently both the Viceroy and the appointed Envoy looked forward to the success of the mission:

*To Viscount Cranbrook*

(*Private.*) 'Simla: June 23, 1879.

My dear Lord Cranbrook,—A thousand thanks for your letter of May 27. Major Cavagnari is now with me; and from all I learn from him and other sources of information, I think you need be under no anxiety about the satisfactory execution and results of the Kabul Treaty, or any troubles in Afghanistan consequent on the withdrawal of our troops. I think the Kabul Treaty must be regarded, not as a conclusion but as a commencement. I would not say this, and do not mean it, in any

To Lord Cranbrook, June 23

alarming sense. But the new Treaty is rather the inauguration than the crowning result of a sound and rational policy. Persistence in this policy ought, amongst other good results, to relieve India for many years to come from the curse of incessant Russian panics, and give to us all round our immediate border a degree of quiet and security hitherto unknown. But for all this we must look, not to any talismanic value in a piece of paper signed with Kabul, but to the steadiness of the Government and the intelligence of its agents in developing, day by day, the good relations now established with the Amir, confirming the confidence and training the character of His Highness, and convincing his people and himself that their best interests are inseparable from ours. For this the opportunity is open and the facilities are great. The Afghans will like and respect us all the more for the thrashing we have given Sher Ali and the lesson we have taught to Russia. Throughout this part of the world, and I dare say throughout the rest of it, a generous enemy is preferred to a frigid or sneaking friend. . . . The Afghan people certainly do not view us with any ill will; whilst, so far as can be judged from deeds as well as words, Yakub thoroughly realises the advantage of our alliance and is resolved not to forfeit it by misbehaviour. He has at Cavagnari's suggestion restored to favour and office the Mustaufi who had been disgraced and imprisoned by his father, and whom he has now appointed his finance minister. It is also on Cavagnari's recommendation that he has appointed General Daod Shah his Commander-in-Chief, and this he has done with a graceful alacrity which appears to have made a most favourable effect upon all concerned. As these

two men now attribute their appointments to our influence, we may reasonably assume that their own influence at Kabul will not be anti-English. To Wali Mohamed, whom he had threatened to impale whenever he caught him, the Amir has frankly reconciled himself; and altogether he is carrying out with a good grace and complete loyalty his obligations under the amnesty clause, which of all his treaty obligations must have been those most distasteful to an Afghan prince. Yakub, by the way, told Cavagnari that his father had been much misled by an impression that Lord Lawrence was omnipotent in England on Indian affairs, and would never allow us to go to war with him. Cavagnari improved the occasion by reading to the Amir some choice bits of Bright's speeches about the 'Barbarous Afghan.' Altogether I feel no doubt that in the work now before us solid progress will be made during the next two years. But the further result will of course depend upon our successors, both here and at home; and if they relax their efforts or reverse our policy, with them must rest the responsibility of an inexcusable failure.'

To Lord Cranbrook, June 23

Sir Louis Cavagnari started on his hazardous mission with the knowledge that he possessed the entire confidence, not only of the Viceroy, but of the Secretary of State, and that in Lord Lytton he had a warm and appreciative friend. On July 5 he wrote:

Cavagnari starts for Kabul

'Dear Lord Lytton, I trust your Lordship will accept this imperfect attempt on my part to express the gratitude I feel for all the favours conferred upon me since I have had the honour of serving under your immediate orders.

From Cavagnari, July 5

From Cavagnari, July 5

'Lord Cranbrook's letter, together with your Lordship's forwarding it, are prizes which seldom fall to the lot of Indian officials, more especially to one of such comparatively short service as myself, and they will be valued by myself and my family more than anything that could be bestowed upon me.'

Viceroy's despatch on Kabul mission, Jan. 1880

It was decided that the total number of Sir Louis Cavagnari's staff and escort should be as small as possible. The reasons for this decision were given in a despatch from the Government of India dated January 7, 1880.

'It had not been our intention to propose Kabul for the residence of our representative; but when the capital was expressly selected by the Amir himself, there were many motives for deferring to the choice of His Highness and there was no tenable ground for opposing it. If the Amir felt reluctance to the establishment of a British embassy at Kabul, he certainly exhibited no sign of it; he raised no difficulties, he suggested no impediments, and, while strenuously combating some clauses of the Treaty, he expressed, from first to last, no disinclination to receive the Envoy nor any mistrust of his power to protect him.

'In these circumstances we deemed it desirable that the British Resident should proceed without delay to take up his appointment at Kabul. Assuming the Amir to be dealing with us in good faith, the advantage to both parties of early action under the Treaty was incontestable, while hesitation or inactivity appeared likely to operate adversely, not only to our own interests, but to those of the Amir. This view of the situation was strengthened by reports received by Bukhtiar Khan, whose letters warned Sir Louis Cavagnari that the party opposed

to the British alliance were making open overtures to neutralise the effect of our recent successes, and to render the Amir averse to a liberal treatment of those persons in whose interests the amnesty clause had been framed, and in whose protection the honour of the British Government was specially concerned. The Amir himself had expressed to Bukhtiar Khan his desire for an early meeting with Sir Louis Cavagnari; and the impression produced by these letters and messages was that the mission should be organised as speedily as possible, and that it should proceed to Kabul without loss of time. This was undoubtedly the view of Sir Louis Cavagnari himself, who was at the time at Simla, and whose opinion on such a point necessarily carried great weight.

Viceroy's despatch on Kabul mission, Jan. 1880

'The constitution of the Envoy's staff and of his escort was carefully considered with Sir Louis Cavagnari at Simla. A strong military escort had been attached to Sir Neville Chamberlain's mission, but the duties which this escort was intended to perform, and the contingencies against which it was meant to provide, were of a wholly different character. Sir Neville Chamberlain, carrying with him valuable gifts for Sher Ali, was about to enter the country of predatory and probably hostile tribes, while the disposition of the Kabul Government towards his mission was very uncertain. Sir Louis Cavagnari, on the other hand, entered Afghan territory under the safe-conduct and public guarantee of the Amir, who had recently been a guest in our camp. Moreover, the strength of Sir Neville Chamberlain's escort, although for the reasons above mentioned it was in our opinion absolutely requisite, had furnished the late Amir with a pretext for attributing an unfriendly purpose

Viceroy's despatch on Kabul mission, Jan. 1880

to the mission which that escort accompanied. It had also been criticised by others, on the ground that whilst too great for an escort it was too small for an army, and calculated to provoke an opposition which no mere escort could overcome. Such criticism, though inapplicable to the condition of Sir Neville Chamberlain's mission, would have been relevant to those which the Government of India had to consider in connection with the embassy of Sir Louis Cavagnari. If our original plan of placing British officers at some points in Afghanistan other than the capital had not been overruled by the Amir's express stipulation regarding Kabul, it might have been expedient to attach to the Envoy a force that would have rendered him independent of the Afghan Government for protection against sudden attacks or local outbreaks. But Sir Louis Cavagnari went, at the special desire of the Amir, to reside at the capital of the Amir's country, within the Amir's own stronghold, and in the closest proximity to the Amir's own residence. It was well known that the Bala Hissar was always occupied by the household troops upon whom the actual ruler believed he could best rely, and it was recollected that at previous periods of extreme anarchy and revolt the fort had afforded a secure refuge to those officers who succeeded in reaching it. To have required the Amir to entertain within the Bala Hissar a British escort sufficient for ensuring the safety of the Envoy in all eventualities, or to have demanded that these troops should be allowed to occupy an entrenched position within the Amir's own fortifications, would have been inconsistent with the whole character of the relations which Sir Louis Cavagnari's embassy represented; and compliance with such a demand would have relieved

the Amir from the greater part of the responsibility which his treaty guarantees had solemnly affirmed. It is probable, indeed, that a force of this strength and character would not have been admitted within the fortress, whilst the objections against placing our embassy thus guarded upon the confines of the city would have been found to be very serious. All experience shows that in such situations the risk of collisions and misunderstandings is multipled in proportion to the number of British soldiers and camp followers that are brought into contact with an armed and excitable population. The dangers to which Sir Louis Cavagnari considered himself and those who accompanied him most liable were those of assassination by the hand of a fanatic, or assault provoked by some street quarrel between the soldiers of his escort and those of the Amir, and he was therefore personally desirous that his staff and escort should be reduced to the most moderate and manageable dimensions. In accordance with these considerations the Envoy's suite was restricted to a secretary (Mr. Jenkins), a medical officer (Dr. Kelly), and a military attaché (Lieutenant Hamilton) in charge of a carefully picked escort of twenty-five Cavalry and fifty Infantry of the Guide Corps.'

Viceroy's despatch on Kabul mission, Jan. 1880

The Envoy's suite

The mission thus constituted left Ali Khel, in the Upper Kurum Valley, on July 18, and from the moment of passing the British border was treated with the utmost cordiality by the Afghan officials.[1]

On July 21 Sir Louis Cavagnari received a letter from Yakub Khan announcing the death of Bukhtiar Khan, who was to have acted as minister to the mission. This event was unfortunate. Bukhtiar Khan had an intimate knowledge of 'all the threads

Death of Bukhtiar Khan

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan*, p. 78.

and shuttles of the Kabul loom,' and his death closed a valuable channel of information. Considerable evidence was brought forward later to prove that he was poisoned by the Amir.

General Kaufmann had sent a special messenger to the Amir informing him of his return to St. Petersburg, and begging him to communicate with him fully and freely on all affairs. The Russian messenger was detained at Kabul till the arrival of Cavagnari, who was instructed to advise the Amir, in a brief but civil reply, to intimate that as correspondence with the agents or representatives of foreign Governments was incompatible with his present treaty arrangements, he must request General Kaufmann to discontinue these communications.

The history of the recent Afghan war includes two distinct periods, of which the first closed with the Treaty of Gundamuk. Sher Ali's dealings with the Russian embassy to Kabul had led to his speedy ruin; he had been driven from his throne by the English, disowned by the Russians, and had died a fugitive. His son Yakub Khan reigned in his stead, with a British Envoy at the capital. The assignment of Sibi and Pishin to the British Government brought our dominion up to the frontier of South Afghanistan, within striking distance of Kandahar; the cession of Kurum and of the Khyber and Michim passes secured for us access, when necessary, into North Afghanistan. All our troops had withdrawn from their positions beyond the Khyber on the line of advance towards Kabul: and General Stewart was preparing to evacuate Kandahar.

The Government of India hoped that the war had been successfully ended: instead of which they were really on the brink of longer, more extensive, and

far more difficult operations. For whereas in the former period the political aim and object of the invasion of Afghanistan was clear and definite—to compel the Amir to renounce the Russian alliance and to accept specific terms; in this second period, now about to begin, we were forced to depose the ruler with whom we had just made a friendly Treaty, to throw the whole of North Afghanistan into confusion by our occupation of the capital, and to stir up against ourselves the jealous animosity of the Afghan people. No one regretted the necessity of this second campaign more than Lord Lytton himself; it involved all that he had hitherto most strenuously desired to avoid, and against which he had fought most persistently in opposition to many of his military advisers. But the event which brought about this change was not one which human foresight could have guarded against or prevented, if the policy of introducing a British Envoy into Afghan territory and attempting a friendly alliance with the Amir was to be adopted at all. Had we insisted on the Envoy being sent to Kandahar or elsewhere in Afghan territory, the Amir's consent would not have been obtained, and had we failed at Gundamuk to conclude a Treaty with Yakub we should only have been forced to do *then* what had to be done four months later, namely to invade his territory and march upon his capital.

Cavagnari enters Kabul, July 24

On July 24 the embassy entered the Afghan capital and was assigned quarters in the Bala Hissar. Its reception was brilliant, while the large crowd which assembled was most orderly and respectful.

*From Sir Louis Cavagnari to Lord Lytton*

'Kabul: July 24, 1879.

From Cavagnari, July 24

'Dear Lord Lytton,—My telegram of to-day will have announced to your Lordship the arrival of the British embassy at Kabul. Nothing could have exceeded the hospitable treatment we have experienced since we left the Kurum frontier, and our reception here was all that could be desired. I left it to General Roberts to describe our departure from Kharatiza. Our marches were very uneventful, and there is nothing to say about them, except to describe the various features of the country we passed through. This my assistants are drawing up, and it will be submitted in a day or two. I may briefly say that there is nothing whatever to check the march of troops from the Shutargardan to Kabul.' After further dwelling on the character of the country, he adds: 'But it is to be hoped that before we have another rupture with the Amir of Afghanistan these tribes will have become good neighbours of ours and be more likely to side with us than with the Kabul ruler.

Proposed railway from Rawalpindi to the Peiwar

'What is essential to the perfecting of the Kurum line is a railway from Rawalpindi to the Peiwar, and then the line would not only from military and political points of view be a good one, but it would become a great commercial route, and quite cut out the Khyber line.

'Yesterday afternoon, Shahgassi Mahomed Yusaf Khan (brother of Kushdil Khan, who has been escorting us) came out to our camp bringing a letter from the Amir, to congratulate me on the additional honours I have received, and to inform me of the arrangements for the reception of the embassy.

From Cavagnari, July 24

'At about four miles from the city he met me this morning with a troop of cavalry, and shortly afterwards Sirdar Abdullah Jan (son of Sultan Jan of Herat) and Moolah Shah Mahomed, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with some more cavalry, met us. Two elephants with gilt and silver howdahs were brought, and the Sirdar and I got into one, while Mr. Jenkins and the Foreign Minister took possession of the other. I don't occupy much sitting room, but the Sirdar was a very fat man and somewhat asthmatic, and as I had to sit cross-legged I began to think that the position was not one in which to spend a happy day, and an hour of it was quite enough for me.

'Nine regiments of infantry and two batteries of artillery with some cavalry were drawn up in column and saluted as the procession passed. As we entered the gates of the city, the 18-pounder battery (the Government of India's present in former days to Sher Ali) fired a salute of seventeen guns. There was not room in front of our residence, so a guard of honour of a regiment of infantry was drawn up in a street at straight angles to the one we passed along, and saluted. The bands on each occasion that they played made an attempt at 'God Save the Queen.' Shortly after we alighted at the residence appointed for us, the Mustaufi and Daod Shah came and paid their respects, and conveyed inquiries after our health on the part of the Amir.

'I paid a formal visit to His Highness at six. He asked after your Lordship's health, and after Her Majesty and the Royal Family, and expressed condolence about the death of the Prince Imperial. He showed a fairly good knowledge about French affairs, and said he supposed the republic would have a good chance of lasting.

From Cavagnari, July 24

'None of our late friends amongst the Afghan Sirdars appeared to-day, and I think Bukhtiar Khan was right in saying that they are treated with scant politeness. The crowd was numerous but most orderly and I did not hear an uncivil remark. Many salaamed as we passed. The soldiers have frequently asked our people if it is true that they will now be relieved from forced soldiering. The Persian (Kashilbach) element have expressed their regret that we did not take and keep Kabul, and stated that had our troops advanced to Jagdaleak they would have risen and killed every Barakzai Sirdar at Kabul.

'The pessimists prophesied that we were going to have trouble between Ali Khel and the Shutargardan, and that the Amir had not the power, even if he had the will, to pass us through the territory of the Ahinedzze Ghilzais (i.e. from Kharatiza to Dobandi). Badshah Khan, the Ghilzai chief, accompanied us, and was very friendly.

'To-morrow I intend getting the dismissal of the Russian letter bearer, and will talk over (cautiously) Persian affairs, without disclosing the Cabinet's wishes until I receive further instructions.

'Yours very faithfully,

'L. CAVAGNARI.'

Three days before the attack on the British embassy Sir Louis Cavagnari wrote :—

From Cavagnari, Aug. 30

'Nawab Ghulam Hasan Khan will arrive here on the 3rd. It is to be regretted that he does not care to remain any longer from his home, but he is now rather old for active employment. I doubt whether he will be of much use, as it is some years since he has had anything to do with Kabul politics, and

things and people have much changed since he was our agent. From Cavagnari, Aug. 30

'What I require is a Mohammedan gentleman of social influence who can be trusted to say and do what he is told. There are many matters on which an assistant of this kind can procure information from sources to which the ordinary news reporters have no access. If he has local experience he can weigh the information he receives and give an opinion worth having as to its value. My difficulty here has been the loss of Bukhtiar Khan, who, though not by any means a pattern of virtue, was just the man that would have been most useful for the next six months, and he knew that on the carrying out of my wishes depended the accomplishment of his own personal objects. . . .

'My principal anxiety up to the present has been regarding the amnesty clause. The Amir has done nothing and will do nothing opposed to the letter of the Treaty, but he shows no disposition to conciliate or treat generously those persons who had communication with us during the war. There can be no question as to his perfect right to grant these men whatever allowances he thinks proper, or to give or withhold lucrative appointments they are desirous of obtaining. All that we can properly contend for is that their persons and private property shall not be subject to molestation on account of their connection with us. As a matter of policy, it would be to the Amir's own interests to treat them generously, and my efforts are being directed to that end; but if he does not follow my advice in this respect, the strict wording of the amnesty clause will not enable us to demand what alone will please these people. On the other hand, if the persons who

From Cavagnari, Aug. 30

held communication with us, although they were all without exception the 'out' party and made overtures to us to benefit themselves, are excluded from the high offices they once held or their personal allowances are reduced, we shall get the reputation of having deserted our friends.

'When advising these Sirdars at Gundamuk to make their peace with the Amir I gave them the option of acting according to my suggestions, or else to become pensioners in India. This is the most that we can do for them, unless we can insist on special allowances and appointments being conferred on them—a course which the Amir would rightly declare to be interference in his domestic affairs.

'The course your Lordship has pointed out as the policy to be followed by the British Envoy at Kabul is precisely what I have been doing. Free intercourse with the embassy, though not interdicted by the Amir, has not been encouraged, and people are consequently afraid to come. I did not expect it to be otherwise at first, and as the persons most anxious to come and see me are those who feel themselves aggrieved, I am by no means in a hurry to receive them. I spoke to the Amir on this subject shortly after my arrival, and he assured me that no prohibition to visit the embassy had ever been given. I have subsequently spoken on several occasions to his ministers, telling them that free intercourse with British officers will be viewed by the people at large as an indication of thorough confidence on the part of the Amir. I pointed out to them that if I wished to carry on intrigue I could do so in spite of all their precautions, but that the object of the British Government was to strengthen the Amir, and that any conversation I should ever

From Cavagnari, Aug. 30

hold with his subjects would be to give them advice calculated to further this object. I argued with them that too frequent or too early intercourse with Sirdar Wali Mahomed Khan and others who are known to be not too friendly to the Amir might be misinterpreted by the public of Kabul, and that therefore I was in no hurry to press the matter, though I informed them that after a reasonable lapse of time I should consider it indicative of a want of trust if some change for the better did not take place. I also remarked to them that whenever I visited the Amir no one was ever present in durbar but the principal officers that he trusts—viz. Sirdar Yahiya Khan, the Mustaufi, General Daod Shah, and Moolah Shah Mahomed, the Foreign Minister—and that this looked as if the Amir did not wish me to even know by sight the other Sirdars of Kabul. I have no doubt that in time some improvement will take place. It is more than likely that the real reason is that the Amir distrusts his own countrymen a great deal more than he does us, and fears that they might use to their own advantage the fact that they were on intimate terms with the British officers, and make out that they were no longer dependent on him.

'When we first came here there was an Afghan guard over the embassy premises. A few days after this was removed after a reference to me, but a small guard was left at the outer gate, and its duty was to report the names of all visitors and the length of time they remained at the embassy. I took no notice of this, but one day I laughingly remarked to the Foreign Minister that I had heard that the sentry had to make such reports, but that if this was true the returns sent in by him to the War Office could not possibly be correct, as many men who came to

From Cavagnari, Aug. 30

see me had to wait a considerable time before I could see them, and occasionally I had to ask them to call another day, so that if it was supposed that the length of time a man remained within the walls of the embassy indicated that he was closeted with me, it was a great mistake. The other day the sentry did attempt to stop a Hindu, *coming to see the doctor*, and I made this an excuse for requesting the removal of this guard. My request was at once complied with.

'In fact, I have nothing whatever to complain of on the part of the Amir or his ministers that I can really lay hold of, though there are many matters I wish I could influence him about. There is no doubt that his authority is most weak throughout the whole of Afghanistan. This is not to be wondered at after the years of misrule and oppression on Sher Ali Khan's part. But if he keeps straight with us he will pull through it, as he derives the same support from the prestige of an alliance as his father did—a fact which the British nation never properly appreciated. The difference, however, is that the people of Afghanistan are inclined to look to the British Envoy more than to their own ruler. The Amir and his advisers, knowing this, will not be in too great a hurry to accept our advice as to administrative reforms that will benefit the people, lest they should consider themselves more indebted to the English than to their own Government. The agriculturists were always praying for the annexation of the country by the English, as they had heard of our light assessments and just rule. But once the late Amir introduced the system of compulsory enlistment which resulted in the increased numbers of the standing army which the revenues of the country

The Amir's authority very weak

could not pay, the soldiery also hailed our approach in the hopes that they would be allowed to return to their homes. The Sirdar class feel that since the abolition of the feudal system the Amir is less dependent on them than used to be the case, and therefore they never feel safe in their position for twenty-four hours. The hill tribes, I imagine, are pretty much as they used to be. The religious element at Kabul is wonderfully quiet. At none of the mosques has a single word disapproving of the English alliance been uttered. I cannot hear that there is any really anti-English party, though there is a very strong anti-Yakub one. I have been quite bewildered sometimes with the stories that have been brought me hinting that no trust should be placed in Yakub Khan, and that he is only temporising with us. Though he is not to be thoroughly trusted, any more than any other Oriental, still if he has any game in hand I must confess to having not the slightest conception as to what it can be. His conduct of his foreign relations is apparently all that could be desired. His letter to Kaufmann was altered to suit my wishes, and the most trifling paper relating to the Oxus frontier is submitted for my information. It seems almost impossible for him to be carrying on any secret arrangements with the Russians, for after his experience of their late perfidy he can have no trust in them. . . . Anyhow, whether there is anything in the reports which reach me or not, I have found nothing tangible in Yakub's conduct to lay hold of, and I therefore put them down to his enemies' invention.'

From Cavagnari, Aug. 30

Rumours Yakub' treachery

Early in August six regiments of infantry had arrived from Herat, and alarming reports had reached

From Cavagnari, Aug. 30

Cavagnari as to their mutinous behaviour. Referring to this, he continues in the same letter:

'It was asserted that the Amir got up the excitement about the Herat regiments, but if he did he did not gain much, for I told his Foreign Minister that either the troops were in hand and could be checked in their present conduct, or else that the Amir had no authority over them. The test I put to him was that I should go out at once in his company in the direction where the troops are encamped, and that if he would not undertake this responsibility I would stay within the walls of the embassy and report that the Amir had no authority over his soldiers. The result was that the Mulah went to the Amir, and shortly afterwards returned and took me out as usual. The next occasion on which I had to speak plainly was on account of a fracas which took place between the Afghan soldiery and some of my escort, when I told the Foreign Minister that if the Amir could not restrain his men I would keep mine in their quarters, and I and my staff would remain at home also. Since then there have been no more complaints. I must say that whenever I go out the conduct of the populace is most orderly.

'I can't say there is much foundation in the report that Yakub Khan has been influenced by Yahiya Khan not to go to the provinces in company with British officers, except the fact that he contemplates putting off his trip until his return from India, as he says he has yet a great deal to do at Kabul. As I telegraphed, he would like to visit India towards the end of December or the beginning of January, and on one occasion when I talked to him he himself said he would like to see Calcutta. He frequently alludes to his intended visit, and I

hope nothing will occur to make him change his mind. If there is any necessity for it, I don't anticipate that there would be any difficulty in my going to Turkestan or Herat, or sending one of my staff. I hardly think the Amir has time to make the trip and get back here before the snows commence; but rumour occasionally says he intends going on tour at the close of the Fast. From Cavagnari, Aug. 30

'There is growing distrust between the Amir and Daod Shah, but it will be dangerous for Yakub at present to attempt to press the latter too severely, as the Commander-in-Chief has a very strong party to support him.

'From what I have seen at Kabul I can quite understand why Yakub Khan preferred to go to Gundamuk than to receive a British mission here. He did not wish us to see the rottenness of the state of affairs for fear that we should increase our demands. Even now there is a strong desire to intrigue to overthrow him, but no one will move in the matter without being sure that we were with them. A report the other day from the Kohistan (even if untrue it shows the line of people's thoughts) stated that some defaulters of revenue assaulted the collectors, and said that if they brought a letter from me that they would pay up. I have no doubt that when these disaffected persons see that they get no encouragement from us things will settle down, and if Yakub Khan will only adopt a little more conciliation and show his subjects that he is not going to use our support as a means of grinding them down, all will go well. I was glad to receive your Lordship's cipher telegram about pecuniary assistance, as I have always thought we shall have to start him clear of his financial difficulties; but it

Unpopularity of Yakub

From Cavagnari, Aug. 30

will be as well to wait until he fully recognises the necessity for our assistance, and we can then help him on conditions favourable to the interests in this country. Though we do not wish to interfere in the internal administration of Afghanistan, it would be well if through our influence the condition of the people is ameliorated, and that they recognise that it is owing to us that good times have come. This is, as I have already remarked, what the Amir does not want to get into people's minds, as he is particularly sensitive about being left to rule his country after his own fashion.'

The letter goes on to say that the Amir was disturbed at the question of the payment of the Kandahar revenues during the recent administration of that province under British occupation. According to the wording of the Gundamuk Treaty, Cavagnari thought it would be hard to expect the Amir to pay the cost of the administration during war out of the revenues realised after *peace*. He also adds that the Amir had no wish to maintain the telegraph line from Kandahar to Pishin, that all he needed was the existence of a telegraphic communication between Kabul and India. The letter ends thus:

'We are much too crowded at the embassy, and if sickness did break out I would request the Amir's permission to go into camp. I think that a residence more on European principles of comfort and sanitation should be built, though we are far from being uncomfortable and have a better residence than the Amir himself.

'I was a trifle disappointed to see that the "Times" took no notice of the entry of the embassy into Kabul, though it printed the telegram sent from

the India Office. I am afraid there is no denying the fact that the British public require a blunder and a huge disaster to excite their interest! I was surprised at the "Times," as during the campaign and the negotiations it behaved well.

From Cavagnari, Aug. 3

'Our doctor here has a great deal to do, and I have recommended the establishment of a dispensary, which, besides being a great civiliser, provides a decent excuse for visitors. . . .

'Having now exhausted all my news, I will conclude this I fear very long letter by assuring your Lordship that, notwithstanding all people say against him, I personally believe Yakub Khan will turn out to be a very good ally, and that we shall be able to keep him to his engagements.

Cavagnari's faith in Yakub

'Yours very faithfully,

'L. CAVAGNARI.'

This letter gives a vivid picture of the atmosphere of intrigue and mutual distrust which surrounded the Afghan Court. The reports that Yakub Khan was not to be trusted; the growing division between him and General Daod Shah—the only Afghan who was wounded in defence of the British residents when they were attacked; the suggestion that the hostile attitude of the Herati troops was in some way brought about by the Amir's influence; his outspoken discontent at the amnesty clause; his exclusion so far as was possible, while holding to the letter of the treaty, of all those who had befriended us in the war; the suspicion shown of any free intercourse on the part of the people with the British residents—all these points, read in the light of what followed, seem to indicate danger; but they were probably no more than the natural outcome of the situation, and with

good luck might have led to nothing. That they excited no alarm in the mind of Cavagnari himself is evident. His last sentence is one of confident hope and good courage, and the whole tone of the letter is sanguine and cheerful.

On August 31 the Viceroy wrote to the Secretary of State:

To the Secretary of State, August 31

'Hearing lately from Cavagnari that the Amir's affairs were in a bad way and his position critical, I telegraphed to him that if the Amir were in serious difficulties from which he thought His Highness might be extricated by prompt pecuniary assistance he should let me know at once, and the money would not be grudged, conditional on adequate guarantees for the Amir's right use of it. This is the reply I have just received by telegraph from Cavagnari: "Kabul, August 29. Personal. Your Lordship's telegram of 26th. Yakub Khan will sooner or later require some pecuniary aid from us. But I would wish to see him recognise and admit his helplessness before offering such aid, and then, as a *quid pro quo*, obtain from him administrative reforms without which his Government cannot last."

'Cavagnari is quite right. His telegram, however, is significant, and I think we must be on the look out for rocks ahead.'

On September 2 Cavagnari sent his last telegram, which contained the words 'All well.' On the following day was perpetrated the massacre of this gallant officer and all his escort.

'The first news of the catastrophe came to General Roberts, who was awakened in his Simla house between one and two o'clock in the morning by his wife telling him that a telegraph messenger had been calling outside for some time with a

telegram which, when read, said that three mutinous Afghan regiments had attacked the Kabul Residency, where the Englishmen were defending themselves. Of all the rumours and stirring news sent up to Simla during the last fifty years, from the various fields of war and politics surveyed by an Indian Viceroy, none have been more startling or more important than this message flashed from the army outposts beyond Kurum to the Himalayas.'[1]

The political officer in the Kurum received two letters from the Amir, the text of which he telegraphed to the Viceroy. The telegram reached Simla very early in the morning of the 5th. 'Kabul, September 3, 8 A.M. Troops who had assembled for pay at Bala Hissar suddenly broke out and stoned their officers, and then all marched to the Residency and stoned it, receiving in return a hail of bullets. Confusion and disturbance reached such a height that it was impossible to quiet it. People from Sherpur and country round Bala Hissar and city—people of all classes—poured into Bala Hissar, and began destroying workshops, artillery park, and magazine, and all troops and people attacked Residency. Meanwhile, I send Daod Shah to help Envoy. On reaching Residency he was unhorsed by stones and spears, and is now dying. I then sent Sirdar Yahiya Khan and my own son, the heir-apparent, with the Koran to the troops; but no use. I then sent well-known Syuds and Mullahs of each clan, but of no avail. Up till now, evening, the disturbance continues. It will be seen how it ends. I am grieved by this confusion. It is almost beyond conception.' The second telegram reached Simla on the afternoon of the 6th, announcing that the Residency had been set on fire, and

**Kabul massacre, September 3**

[1] Sir Alfred Lyall.

ending up with the words: 'I have lost my friend the Envoy, and also my kingdom. Am terribly grieved and perplexed.' These letters were addressed to General Roberts. The Kurum agent telegraphed that the dead bodies of Sir Louis Cavagnari, his staff, and his escort, had been seen by one of the principal Ghilzai chiefs, who described their defence of the Residency till it was destroyed by fire as almost miraculous.

In a letter written by the Amir at the same time to his uncle, the Governor of Zemindawar, he gave a very different account of the affair. Only two regiments, both of the body guard, were said to have mutinied. Nothing was mentioned of any attempt at rescue, or participation of the people, and it was expressly stated no other injury was done, and that by evening everything was quiet.[1]

A secret Memorandum on the Kabul massacre was received by the Indian Government on October 6, 1879, from Sirdar Wali Mahomed Khan. In this Memorandum it was stated:—

'From the very first day the Amir arrived at Kabul from Gundamuk he preached to the people, and counselled them that he and they being Mohammedans and the faithful, should night and day endeavour to keep in view the policy of religious war. He sent letters on the subject in all directions.

'When the Herat troops were one march from Kabul they were instructed to raise a cry, on arrival at the capital, that they would wage a religious war, and that they would not allow the English officers to remain in the town. In accordance with these instructions, they raised cries in the city on their arrival there. They quarrelled with the servants of

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

Major Cavagnari in the streets of the town on one or two occasions. I reported this to the Major, and he remarked in reply that it was the habit of a rabid dog to bite, be the person bit however innocent, and that no one could touch his hair. . . . On Wednesday, the 15th of Ramazan (September 3), three of these six regiments asked for their pay. They were offered one month's wages, but they refused to take the money, and said that they would take nothing short of three months' salary. The Amir told them that they did not perform any service, or any religious act, or protect the honour of their country, and so were not entitled to three months' wages. On hearing this they broke out, and proceeded towards the residence of Major Cavagnari, saying that they would now engage in a religious conflict. Daod Shah came out to prevent them in their design, but was not successful in his attempt. He was disgraced, and was wounded in three or four places. At this juncture Saif-ud-din Khan (a general) presented himself before the Amir, and remarked that if His Highness gave permission he would aid and save Major Cavagnari. But he was rebuked, and was dismissed from service with the remark that he had no concern in the matter.'

The Viceroy, commenting on this information, pointed out 'that all accusations against Yakub made by Wali Mahomed and the other Sirdars whom Yakub had been ill-treating must be taken *cum grano*. But,' he adds, 'what staggers me in Wali Mahomed's statement is that it elucidates, and confirms, similar sinister assertions as to Yakub's treachery made by two or three other informants, who apparently can have no personal motive for incriminating the Amir. The majority of the survivors, and spectators, of the

assault of September 3rd all express a conviction that Yakub could have rescued the Embassy had he chosen to do so; and all aver that he positively prohibited General Saif-ud-din Khan from going to the assistance of the Envoy. . . . These informants also imply that Yakub permitted or ordered Daod Shah to go to the relief of the Embassy with the intention of getting him killed, as Uriah was put in front of the battle. It is certainly noteworthy that General Daod Shah, who professed strong attachment to the British alliance, was out of favour with Yakub; that he was very severely wounded in his efforts to quell the mutiny; and that, of all to whom Yakub entrusted that task, he is the only one who received any injury at all.'

**Roberts starts for Kabul, September 4**

On receipt of the first intelligence brought by the Ghilzai messenger, the Viceroy telegraphed orders to General Massy to move at once to the Shutargardan and crown it. General Roberts, who was at Simla on the Army Commission, started within twenty-four hours of the receipt of the news for the Peiwar, with instructions to march upon Kabul, with every possible expedition compatible with safety, with a force of 5,000 men of all arms. General Stewart at once re-occupied Kandahar, where the Amir's authorities willingly replaced themselves under his protection. The troops along the Khyber line were rapidly re-inforced, and the Viceroy informed the Amir that a strong British force would march as speedily as possible from the Shutargardan to his assistance, and that he must do all in his power to facilitate its progress through his country.

**Lord Lytton to Lord Beaconsfield, September 4**

The day after the news of the disaster, Lord Lytton wrote to the Prime Minister: 'The web of policy so carefully and patiently woven has been rudely

To Lord Beaconsfield, September 4

shattered. We have now to weave a fresh, and I fear a wider one, from undoubtedly weaker materials. All that I was most anxious to avoid in the conduct of the late war and negotiations has now been brought about by the hand of fate, the complete collapse of all the national conditions of independent government in Afghanistan, the obligation to occupy Kabul, and the great difficulty of evacuating it without risk of renewed disaster to Yakub Khan, or any other puppet ruler, on whose behalf we must now be content to undertake the virtual administration of the country, for the present at any rate.

'These conditions, now unavoidable, involve the further vexation of increased military expenditure and political uncertainty. . . . I feel most keenly how heavy must be the weight with which this sore and sudden blow will fall upon Her Majesty's Government. On the other hand, however, the great advantages of our new frontier will be revealed in the comparative alacrity and freedom from serious danger with which its possession enables us to reach Kabul in a crisis, and generally to deal with the serious difficulty which we certainly have not provoked. . . . I do not disguise from myself that we may now be forced to take in hand the permanent disintegration of the national fabric it was our object to cement in Afghanistan, and that, in any case, we shall probably be compelled to intervene more widely and actively than we have ever desired to do in that country. Still, the renewed, and perhaps extended, efforts now imposed upon us *can* have no other result, if rightly directed, than the firmer establishment of the undisputed supremacy of the British Power from the Indus to the Oxus . . . But meanwhile and for ever, alas, we suffer one grievous

On the death of Cavagnari

To Lord Beaconsfield, September 4

bereavement, which to all concerned is irreparable, and which will be to myself an abiding sorrow and bitter pain all the rest of my life. India has lost, when she most needed him, one of her greatest men, the Queen one of Her Majesty's ablest and most devoted servants. I have lost a beloved friend and more! He has perished heroically, in the faithful discharge of a dangerous service to his chief and his country. It is the duty of his country to avenge his death. My hope is, that in the recognition and performance of that duty his country will not fail, and that some sense of its solemnity may perhaps mitigate, for a while at least, the reckless malignity of party passion and spite.'

Support from the Home Government and from the Queen

The Government at home warmly supported the Viceroy in this dark hour. He received an official telegram telling him that the Government were prepared to leave everything unconditionally in his hands, and warmly assuring him of unreserved support in taking vigorous measures. From the Queen he also received a letter which he described as 'kind, patriotic, and manly,' adding: 'She is really a better Englishman than anyone of her subjects, and never falls short in a national crisis when the interests or honour of her empire are at stake.'

The story of the famous march to Kabul has been fully told by the hero of it, and no detailed account of it here need be given.

The Amir takes refuge in British camp, September 27

It will be remembered that after various attempts to delay the progress of the march on one pretext and another, the Amir himself finally took refuge in the British camp. General Baker had advanced as far as Kushi, and there, on September 27, the Amir arrived with his father-in-law, Yahiya Khan, the heir-apparent,[1] all his ministers, including General

[1] Muza Khan.

Daod Shah, and about sixty other followers. Lord Lytton described what followed in a letter to Sir James Stephen :—

'October 12.

To Sir James Stephen, October 12

'General Roberts proceeded to Kushi on the following day to meet the Amir, and in the meanwhile the Amir's rival, Wali Mahomed, and all the Sirdars who had been out of favour with Yakub ever since the Gundamuk Treaty for having been on friendly terms with the British during the late war, had also arrived in the camp of General Baker. The Amir represented to Roberts that he had left ladies of his family in the Bala Hissar, besides several regiments, who would probably rise and massacre them all if the British force advanced any further. He was told that, although our advance could not be delayed a day or an hour, ample time would be given to all non-combatants and women to place themselves in safety. In accordance with an instruction I had recently sent him, Roberts simultaneously issued and forwarded to Kabul a proclamation warning non-combatants to clear out, and announcing that all persons found armed in and around Kabul would be treated as enemies. The Amir, his ministers, and all Sirdars then avowed there was a universal conviction at Kabul that it would be simply impossible for us to advance there in any force before the spring of next year, that he, they, and all concerned had been acting on this conviction, and that they were quite bewildered by the rapidity and *mass* of our movement. They might well be so. Roberts was advancing on the direct line to Kabul with a force of between 6,000 and 7,000 men, leaving another force of equal strength to hold the Kurum in his rear. General Bright was simultaneously advancing up the Khyber

Roberts's advance on Kabul

To Stephen, October 12

with a force of upwards of 16,000 men, which would be in communication with Roberts almost as soon as he reached Kabul; and the large force under General Stewart, having re-occupied Kandahar and Khelat-i-Ghilzai, was threatening Ghuzni. On hearing of the Amir's arrival in our camp, my first inclination was to regard this step as a conclusive and conspicuous proof of his loyalty. It appears, however, that the step was by no means a spontaneous or a willing one. This is what Roberts writes about it: "The Amir left Kabul secretly and rode to Kushi in haste, not bringing with him even a single tent. He had become aware that Wali Mahomed and other Sirdars intended to join the British, and thought it best to be beforehand with them; especially when he found from my letter of September 25 that our advance was inevitable." He was evidently much disappointed at finding the Sirdars had been beforehand with him, and expressed a wish to be reconciled with them. But General Roberts rightly considered "the time and place inopportune for reconciliations." General Baker made the best arrangements he could for the Amir's tent accommodation, and placed him in the centre of the camp. On the second day His Highness' own tents arrived, and he asked to have them pitched outside the camp limits. To this Roberts assented, knowing that if he wished to escape he could do so even from the middle of the camp; but suggested that for his safety and honour he should have a guard similar to the General's own. He agreed to this, "and so now," writes Roberts on October 1, "there is a Highlander standing sentry in front and a Goorkha in rear of his tent."

'Meanwhile General Roberts's force continued its advance towards Kabul. Somewhere, in time,

between the 2nd and the 6th instant, and, in place, between Kushi and Charasiab, a certain Sirdar, Nek Mahomed, said to be an uncle of the Amir's (but of whom I have hitherto heard nothing), rode out from Kabul and asked permission to see the Amir, with whom he had a long and secret interview of some hours. He then rode rapidly back to Kabul. On the 6th instant the reconnoitring parties sent out by Roberts reported that "the enemy" was advancing in great force from the city; and soon afterwards the high range of hills intervening between Charasiab and Kabul were crowded with Afghan troops and people from the city; while parties of Ghilzais appeared on the hills running along both flanks of the camp, and the road along which General Macpherson was advancing (to Zahidabad) with large convoys of stores and reserve ammunition was reported to be threatened. Macpherson was immediately warned, and some cavalry sent to his assistance. But Roberts wisely recognised the absolute necessity of carrying the heights on his front before nightfall. This difficult task was entrusted to Baker, who commanded the advanced guard. Baker at once sent Major White (an excellent officer), with a wing of the 92nd Highlanders, three guns, and some native infantry to take the right of the position; from which the enemy was dislodged, after an obstinate resistance, leaving twenty Afghan guns in possession of Major White's small force. Baker, meanwhile, making a turning movement to the left, was soon hotly engaged; but, carrying height after height, completely scattered the enemy in great confusion, capturing two standards. Our total loss was small—three officers wounded, but none killed. Enemy's loss not yet

To Stephen, October 12

Nek Mahomed confers with the Amir

Baker carries the heights between Charasiab and Kabul

To Stephen, October 12

known, but believed to be very great. Nek Mahomed, who had so shortly before had an interview with the Amir, was the leading spirit of this resolute and well-planned opposition to our advance. His horse was shot under him in the engagement, but he seems to have escaped. Roberts has no doubt that the whole thing has been planned and carefully prepared by the Amir, whose instructions were carried back to Kabul by Nek Mahomed. The enemy's position was admirably chosen and held in very great strength. All that has since happened convinces me that had he not been immediately expelled from it he would have been powerfully reinforced and his fortifications well pushed forward during the night, in which case the stand made at Charasiab would probably have been much more formidable and prolonged. It is equally apparent now that the Amir's urgent pleas for delaying our advance were made with the object of gaining time for the organisation of a strong resistance to it, and the reinforcement of the positions, both at Charasiab and the Bala Hissar, by regiments which he has hastily recalled from Kohistan and other localities.

Position outside Kabul, October 8

General Roberts, continuing his advance, arrived before Kabul in the afternoon of October 8. He found the Afghan troops who had just returned from Kohistan entrenching themselves on a high hill beyond the Bala Hissar, and immediately commanding the city of Kabul. He at once sent General Massy with eight squadrons of cavalry round by the north of the city to watch the roads leading to Bamian and Kohistan, and thus cut off their retreat. Up till sunset General Roberts was in heliographic communication with Generals Massy and Baker, and this was then the general condition of the

situation before Kabul. General Baker was just about to attack the enemy from the heights above the Bala Hissar. General Massy had reached Aliabad on the Bamian road. He had found the Sherpur cantonment deserted, and in it no less than seventy-eight guns, many of them Armstrongs and 48-pounders, given to Sher Ali by Lord Northbrook. All of these guns he secured. General Macpherson had joined General Roberts with stores and reserve ammunition, and was hastening forward with a strong force to strengthen, before daybreak, the position of General Baker; whilst three of the Afghan regiments from Ghuzni were simultaneously hastening to join the force opposed to Baker, and this force was every moment being swelled by armed bands from the city. This was the state of things before Kabul when General Roberts's telegram of the 8th reached me during the night of the 10th. I am writing on the afternoon of the 12th, and have not since then had any further news from Roberts. But I am not anxious. The telegraph now does not work beyond the Shutargardan. Messages from Roberts must reach that place by runners or by heliograph, and he would doubtless be too busily engaged to establish heliographic communication all at once. My only fear is that the scoundrels may escape during the night.'

To Stephen, October 12

'Camp Naldera: October 12, 6.30 P.M.

'My dear Stephen,—The news I was awaiting when I interrupted my letter this afternoon has come sooner than I expected. During my walk I received the following telegram from Roberts:

'"*Outside Kabul, October* 10.—General Baker was unable to deliver his attack on the evening of the

Telegram from Roberts, October 10

8th on account of the darkness. Before daybreak yesterday General Macpherson joined him with 67th Foot, 28th Native Infantry, and four Horse Artillery guns on elephants. Enemy, however, fled during the night, leaving on their very strong position twelve guns (six field and six mountain). Cavalry pursued for several miles, in two detachments, under Generals Massy and Hugh Gough. But the enemy had so completely dispersed that they only overtook a few small parties. We have now in our possession 110 guns. There are some thirty more in the Bala Hissar, and a few, I hear, in the city. Our camp is pitched on the Siah Sung ridge, immediately overlooking and within 1,300 yards of the Bala Hissar and city. I shall make public entry into, and take possession of, the Bala Hissar tomorrow or next day. The troops have worked splendidly. For several days we have been without tents, and rations had to be carried for want of transport."'

**Roberts enters Kabul, October 12**

Thus, in a little over a month from the day he left Simla, General Roberts 'made his triumphal entry into Kabul at the head of as fine a force as was ever put in the field, after having given the Afghans a severe thrashing at Charasiab, and captured two of their standards and 150 of their guns without the loss of a single European officer.'[1]

On October 12, accompanied by the Amir's eldest son, he made his public entry into the city. Early that morning Yakub Khan had 'walked to General Roberts's camp, accompanied by only two attendants, and expressed his determination to resign the Amirship. He said he had intended doing so before going to Kushi, but had allowed himself to be overpersuaded. He was in very low spirits; said his life

[1] Written by Lord Lytton in a letter dated October 14, 1879.

had been a miserable one; that he would rather be a grasscutter in the English camp than ruler of Afghanistan, and begged that he might live in the camp till he could be sent to India or London or wherever the Viceroy might desire to send him.'[1]

At the close of the Durbar held on the same day the Mustaufi, the Wazir Shah Mahommed, Yahiya Khan (the Amir's father-in-law), and Zakaria Khan, were by the orders of General Roberts placed under arrest on the ground that they were the most influential men in the country and that all their influence had been exerted against us, as had been clearly proved by the resistance offered to the advance on Kabul. When Yakub Khan heard of these arrests, his look was described as that 'of a hunted beast, terror unmistakably imprinted on his features.' He said he had come to regard his countrymen with unspeakable hatred, loathing, and fear; that every hour which prolonged his residence in Afghanistan was a burden and a horror to him: that his sole remaining wish was for safety, repose, and obscurity under British protection anywhere out of his own country. 'The Afghans,' he said, 'know that I put my father on his throne; and while I was fighting here and there for a precarious cause, they loved and admired me: when my father imprisoned me, they forgot me. When I made peace with you in their interests, they hated me and conspired against me. There is no trusting them, they are dogs and serpents, and I have done with them for ever.'

Viceroy to Lord Cranbrook, Nov. 5, 1879

The Viceroy and Indian Government regarded the spontaneous and unexpected abdication of the Amir as likely to facilitate the immediate settlement of the main lines of our future policy. Even before full

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan*, p. 95.

inquiries had been made into the authorship of the massacre of the British Envoy his guilty participation in the crime appeared so far probable as to make the continuance of his rule a matter of doubtful expediency.

On receipt of the first telegram from Kabul Lord Lytton personally inclined to a speedy declaration of policy on the lines of disintegration. There can be no doubt that any definite pronouncement would have facilitated General Roberts's task, but the Government at home were opposed to any premature or hasty decisions with regard to the future administration of the country, and Lord Lytton himself readily agreed that the proclamation to be issued by General Roberts should leave the future undefined. It ran as follows:

General Roberts's proclamation, October 28

'I, General Roberts, on behalf of the British Government, hereby proclaim that the Amir, having by his own free will abdicated, has left Afghanistan without a Government.

'In consequence of the shameful outrage upon its Envoy and suite the British Government has been compelled to occupy by force of arms Kabul, the capital, and to take military possession of other parts of Afghanistan.

'The British Government now commands that all authorities, chiefs, and sirdars do continue their functions in maintaining order, referring to me when necessary.

'The British Government desire that the people shall be treated with justice and benevolence, and that their religious feelings and customs be respected.

'The services of such sirdars and chiefs as assist in preserving order will be duly recognised, but all

disturbers of the peace, and persons concerned in attacks upon the British authority will meet with condign punishment.

'The British Government, after consultation with the principal sirdars, tribal chiefs, and others representing the interests and wishes of the various provinces and cities, will declare its will as to the future permanent arrangements to be made for the good government of the people.'

This proclamation was published at Kabul on October 28, and on the same day Yakub Khan was informed that his resignation was accepted.

General Roberts, being convinced that no good would result from the introduction of any Afghan element into the Government pending final orders as to the disposal of the country, decided to carry on the administration without the declared aid of any Afghan chiefs. He assumed possession of the State Treasury, and announced that for the future the collection of revenue and expenditure would be under his control.

Previous to the acceptance of his resignation, Yakub Khan in a private interview with General Roberts had volunteered some interesting statements with regard to the circumstances that led to Sher Ali's estrangement from the Government of India and adherence to Russia.

Yakub's statements regarding Sher Ali

'In 1869 my father was fully prepared to throw in his lot with you. He had suffered many reverses before making himself secure on the throne of Afghanistan; and he had come to the conclusion that his best chance of holding what he had won lay in an alliance with the British Government. He did not receive from Lord Mayo as large a supply of arms and ammunition as he had hoped, but never-

theless he returned to Kabul fairly satisfied, and so he remained until the visit of Noor Mahomed Shah to India in 1873. This visit brought matters to a head. The diaries received from Noor Mahomed Shah during his stay in India, and the report which he brought back on his return, convinced my father that he could no longer hope to obtain from British Government all the aid that he wanted, and from that time he began to turn his attention to the thought of a Russian alliance.'[1]

Treaty between Russia and Afghanistan

The terms of the Treaty between Sher Ali and the Russians, written out from memory, were handed to General Roberts by the two Afghan ministers who had personally participated in the negotiation of it. One of them was Sher Ali's Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the other was the minister deputed by His Highness to accompany the Russian Plenipotentiary on his return to Tashkend with the Treaty in its final form. The statements separately made by these ministers were corroborated by Yakub Khan, who declared that the Treaty had been concluded by his father, that it had remained for months in his own possession, and that he had destroyed it with some other important papers on the eve of our entry into Kabul. According to these informants, the Treaty was one of close alliance between Russia and Afghanistan. It gave to Russia complete control over the Amir's foreign relations, with free and exclusive commercial access to all parts of the country. And it gave to the Amir and his selected heir the promise of Russian assistance in the suppression of domestic rebellion or dynastic rivals, and the Russian co-operation for the reconquest of the Peshawur Valley in the event of war between Russia and England.

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

The following is a passage from General Roberts's report to the Government of India, dated November 22, 1879.

General Roberts's report, November 22

'The magnitude of Sher Ali's military preparations is in my opinion a fact of peculiar significance. Before the outbreak of hostilities last year, the Amir had raised and equipped with arms of precision sixty-eight regiments of infantry and sixteen of cavalry. The Afghan artillery amounted to near 300 guns. Numbers of skilled artisans were constantly employed in the manufacture of rifles, cannon, and breech-loading small-arms. More than a million pounds of powder, and I believe several million pounds of home-made Snider ammunition, were in the Bala Hissar at the time of the late explosion. Swords, helmets, uniforms, and other military equipments were stored in proportionate quantities. Finally, Sher Ali had expended on the construction of Sherpur cantonments an astonishing amount of labour and money. The extent and cost of this work may be judged of from the fact that the whole of the troops under my command will find cover during the winter within the cantonment and its outlying buildings, and the bulk of them in the main line of rampart itself, which extends to a length of nearly two miles under the southern and western slopes of the Bemaru hills. Sher Ali's original design was, apparently, to carry the wall round the hills, a distance of five miles, and the foundations were laid for a considerable portion of this length. All these military preparations were quite unnecessary except as a provision for contemplated hostilities with ourselves. And it is difficult to understand how their entire cost could have been met from the Afghan treasury, the gross revenue of the country

General Roberts's report, November 22

amounting only to about eighty lacs of rupees per annum.'

On the 28th of October General Roberts had written to the Viceroy: 'It is surprising to see how much more Russian than English Kabul is. Russian money, Russian crockery, Russian—or, as they call it, Bokhara—silk, Russian-cut clothes, &c. The roads leading to Central Asia are not better, perhaps, than those towards India, but the Russians have certainly taken more advantage of their position than we have and have had apparently much more to do with the commerce of the country than we have had.'

The instructions, dated September 29, which General Roberts received from the Government of India before starting for Kabul were purposely very general in their character. The Viceroy desired that he should be as little fettered as possible by regulations which might prove inapplicable to the situation he would find at Kabul. But, though general, these instructions were very comprehensive. They ran as follows:

Instructions to General Roberts from Government of India, September 29

'As soon as you shall have established yourself at Kabul you will institute a close investigation into all the causes and circumstances of the outrage which has compelled the British Government to occupy the capital of His Highness the Amir. Upon the question of the punishment which, after due inquiry, it will be your duty to inflict as speedily as possible upon those who have abetted or participated in the perpetration of this outrage, His Excellency the Governor-General in Council desires me to commend to your careful attention the following observations.

'I am to point out, in the first place, that for an offence of this character the Afghan nation must be

held to be collectively responsible. It was a totally unprovoked and most barbarous attack by the Amir's soldiery, and by the people of his capital, upon the representative of an allied State, who was residing under the Amir's protection in the Amir's fortress, in very close proximity to the Amir himself, and whose personal safety and honourable treatment had been solemnly guaranteed by the ruler of Afghanistan. In the second place, I am to observe that the nature and magnitude of the outrage leave no room for doubt that it had its leaders and its instigators—that certain persons must have taken a prominent part in the attack on the Residency and in the murder of its inmates; while there is a strong presumption that such an outbreak must have been fomented and encouraged by persons of rank and influence. Towards this latter conclusion all our present information points, and it is corroborated by expressions used in the letters written by the Amir himself after the occurrence of the catastrophe.

Instructions to General Roberts, September 29

'The retribution to be exacted must accordingly be adapted to the twofold character of the offence. It must be imposed upon the Afghan nation in proportion as the offence was national and as the responsibility falls upon any particular community, while it must also involve condign punishment of those individuals who may be found guilty of any participation in the crime. In regard to the penalties to be borne by the State, by the city, or by the people generally, it would be premature in the present stage of your operations to issue to you any specific directions. The imposition of a fine upon the city of Kabul would be in accordance with justice and precedent. The military precautions required for the security of your position may necessitate the demoli-

Instructions to General Roberts, September 29

tion of fortifications, and possibly the removal of buildings which may lie within the range of your defences or may interfere with your control over the city. In forming your plans for works of this kind required by military exigencies, you will have the opportunity of considering whether they can be combined with any measures, compatible with justice and humanity, for leaving a memorial of the retribution exacted from the city in some manner and by some mark that will not be easily obliterated.[1]

'In regard to the punishment of individuals, it should be swift, stern, and impressive, without being indiscriminate or immoderate. Its infliction must not be delegated to subordinate officers of minor responsibility acting independently of your instructions or supervision; and you cannot too vigilantly maintain the discipline of the troops under your orders, or superintend their treatment of the unarmed population, so long as your orders are obeyed and your authority is unresisted. You will deal summarily in the majority of cases with persons whose share in the murder of anyone belonging to the British embassy shall have been proved by your investigations; but while the execution of justice should be as public and striking as possible, it should be completed with all practicable expedition, since the indefinite prolongation of your proceedings might spread abroad unfounded alarm.

[1] It does not appear that anything of the kind was eventually done, or that the fine, threatened in General Roberts's proclamation of October 12, was levied. A violent explosion occurred in the Bala Hissar on October 16, in consequence of which it was decided to move the troops into the Sherpur cantonment. . . . The removal to Sherpur was effected on November 9, but there is no record of the Bala Hissar having been destroyed, either then or later.—*Narrative of Events in Afghanistan*, p. 93.

Instructions to General Roberts, September 29

'Although nothing can now be said in regard to the future internal administration of Afghanistan, the Government of India cannot ignore the possibility of being forced to exercise over that administration a closer and more direct control than has hitherto been contemplated or desired. It is, therefore, especially important that during the period of difficulty and disorganisation which must, it is feared, be passed before a better and more settled system of administration can be established the people should learn from the strict discipline of our army, and from the wise and upright proceedings of our military and political officers, to look to the strength and justice of the British Government as their best guarantee for the future tranquillity of their country.'

The military tribunal appointed by General Roberts to investigate the causes and circumstances which led to the outbreak of September 3, and further to undertake the actual trial of accused persons, did not close their sittings till the end of November, when eighty-seven persons had been tried for complicity in the massacre or disobedience to Lord Roberts's proclamation, and had been executed.

The evidence collected by the Kabul Commission for the purpose of determining whether, and to what extent, the outbreak was premeditated, and the responsibility which attached to the Amir Yakub Khan in connection with it, was carefully considered and analysed by a committee appointed by the Viceroy, and composed of gentlemen possessing long and varied experience in judicial investigation and in dealing with the testimony of Asiatics.

Their conclusions were as follows: '(1) That the massacre was not instigated by the Amir, or by

Conclusions of the Committee of Inquiry on Kabul Commission

his enemies, or by anyone else; but that its actual perpetrators proceeded altogether of their own motion; (2) that though the regiments that attacked the Residency had, like other regiments in the Amir's service, for some little time, and at all events since the arrival of the troops from Herat, entertained feelings of hostility towards the mission, the attack was in no way premeditated by them, but was the result of what may in a certain sense be termed accidental circumstances; and (3) that, though the Amir and his immediate advisers must be acquitted of complicity in the attack on the Residency, they were in a position to interpose effectively, when the attack began, and while it was going on, for the protection or rescue of the embassy; that they were at least culpably indifferent to the fate of the Envoy and his companions; and that they totally disregarded the solemn obligations which they had undertaken to protect the British embassy at Kabul.' While accepting these conclusions, the Viceroy considered that they erred on the side of leniency to the Amir, and that they constituted sufficient grounds for regarding the restoration of Yakub Khan to the throne of Kabul as for ever out of the question.

With regard to our future policy Lord Lytton wrote to Lord Cranbrook on October 23:

'October 23.

Viceroy to Secretary of State, October 23

'I entirely agree with you that nothing has occurred, or is occurring, to justify a frightened departure from the lines of a policy carefully considered and deliberately adopted and followed thus far. The Treaty of Gundamuk was undoubtedly the result, the first definite result, of such a policy, and I am confident that any violent deviation from that policy in either direction would be a fatal error.

But the policy did not grow out of the Treaty, the Treaty grew of the policy, which always looked and saw far beyond it; and in our despatch reviewing the situation created by it, the Treaty was distinctly recognised as the *commencement*, not the *conclusion*, of a new era in our relations with Afghanistan. The object of the policy which led up to the Treaty was to secure with the minimum of effort, liability, and cost to ourselves, but in any case to *secure*, a recognised hold over Afghanistan sufficiently strong to protect India from the serious dangers to which she must be exposed by the hostility of any Afghan ruler over whom she has no effectual control, by the anarchy of the Afghan provinces upon our border, or by their subjection to foreign influence other than our own. The method of the policy was to prosecute the attainment of this object steadily, unswervingly, but without precipitancy, taking prompt advantage of every favourable opportunity as it arose, forestalling before it had arisen every danger that could be foreseen within that period of time to which, in the conduct of practical politics, the future is necessarily limited, and opposing a firm front to every difficulty which could not be averted; doing, in short, in each phase of the situation as time might develop it, no more than was strictly necessary to maintain the ground previously won and facilitate progress to the goal not yet reached; but never in any phase of the situation doing *less* than this. Unreservedly adopting that method, which I still hold sound, I pointed out in all my letters written before and during the late war, that all we required for the present (which if secured would go far to secure all our requirements in the future) could be allowed at very moderate expenditure of military

To Secretary of State, October 23

To Secretary of State, October 23

and financial effort by arrangements similar to those subsequently embodied in the Treaty of Gundamuk; but that the point we must always keep steadily in view was the establishment of a firm hold upon that portion of Afghan territory which lies within our immediate reach up to the Hindu Kush and its passes, along the line of the Helmund. For these lines constitute the outer wall of our natural fortress. It was, I considered, and still consider, most inexpedient to seize this position prematurely by force so long as there was any reasonable prospect of gradually securing it by other means; but it was, I thought, absolutely necessary that if other means failed, or if events beyond our control precipitated the crisis we were anxious to avert, it should find us ready and resolved to take up that position without hesitation and delay. It appears to me that this is precisely the situation in which we are now placed. The object of the Treaty of Gundamuk was to prevent nearly everything which has now happened in spite of that Treaty, and which would infallibly have happened sooner had we failed in the negotiation of it—complete anarchy throughout Afghanistan, the imminent necessity of forcibly suppressing that anarchy, and the absolute impossibility of doing so, or of exercising any peaceable indirect control over its turbulent elements, by the mere support of an independent or *quasi*-independent Afghan ruler. The Treaty was very carefully considered and very carefully framed. I am convinced that of the problem we were then dealing with it was the wisest, safest, and soundest solution that could have been adopted; and to a situation necessarily and notoriously pregnant with risks and uncertainties, it opened at least the fairest possible

To Secretary of State, October 23

prospects. But the Treaty was, from the very nature of the conditions which alone rendered it possible, a somewhat delicate and artificial political structure of a tentative character, avowedly dependent on time and favourable chance for the gradual consolidation of it. If, under conditions apparently favourable to its stability, the Treaty could not avert the blow which has shattered it to fragments, and suddenly let in upon us that deluge of embarrassments which it was devised to keep out, is it not idle to attempt to cope with those embarrassments by clinging to the fragments of the Treaty? Before the confusion of tongues begins, we should hasten to build Babylon from the bricks of Babel, otherwise I fear we shall be pelted with stones taken from the supposed ruins of our own policy. Of course we cannot recede. But neither can we stand still. We *must* advance if we would be safe.

'As regards Kabul and the Northern Afghan provinces, it is quite premature, quite impossible, to propound *now* a permanent programme. Our action in this direction must be provisional; but, though provisional, it must also, I think, be prompt, plain, and very firm, so far as it goes. In the complete collapse and disappearance of the Amir's authority, the first instinct of every Afghan chief and tribe will be to consider what and where is the strongest power within reach—that is to say, the power best able to hurt or help them *quickly*—and then to shape their course in direct reference to the apparent attitude and purpose of that power. In the confusion, already general throughout Afghanistan, it is the authority whose first utterance or action is free from confusion that will inspire confidence or command obedience, and thus acquire support. If the

To Secretary of State, October 23

populations and Sirdars of Northern Afghanistan are promptly impressed with a conviction that the power of the British Government is stronger, its purpose more definite, and its action more likely to be swift and decisive, than those of all the other forces which will soon be rushing into every vacuum created by the collapse of authority, then the British Government will, without difficulty, "ride the whirlwind and direct the storm." But if, on the other hand, their first impression, however erroneous, is that the British Government is as much embarrassed as they are themselves by the surrounding chaos, that it is waiting for the independent evolution of some political nucleus not struck into being by its creative fiat, and that, its policy being dubious, its action is likely to be dilatory, then I think the British Government may have a very hot time of it in Afghanistan. For this reason I think we should instantly take public possession of the authority which falls from the hand of the Amir into our own, and promptly, although provisionally, enforce that authority, so far as our practical power of enforcing extends, in every direction. This, I think, is the first thing we have to do in Northern Afghanistan, and we cannot do it too soon for our own safety. The next step will be either to proclaim our permanent retention of that authority, or to transfer it, with very careful and copious restrictions, to some sort of native government.'

A suggestion was made to the Secretary of State by Sir John McNeil to transfer the capital of Afghanistan from Kabul to Kandahar. Lord Lytton was averse to the idea. 'If we permanently hold the whole of Afghanistan . . . then Kabul will always be a point of the highest strategic value to ourselves,

To General Roberts, Oct. 13, 1879

and if we attempt to retain the whole of Afghanistan under the rule of any single authority Kabul would probably be a stronger political centre than Kandahar.' While strongly advocating the separation of Kandahar from Kabul as part of a policy of disintegration, he was not in favour of our direct annexation of that province except under certain conditions. The political and military importance of Kandahar had always seemed to him somewhat over-estimated by Sir H. Rawlinson and other eminent authorities, and the only circumstance which in his opinion would make our occupation of Kandahar an immediate and imperative necessity would be the handing over to Persia or any other Power the districts of Herat and Seistan.

Writing of this to Lord Cranbrook on November 5 Lord Lytton says:

To Lord Cranbrook, November 5

'I hope that the main question of our future Afghan policy will be deliberately settled before we deal with its details. If we decide to remain within our present lines, I do not think it would be safe or wise to give an inch of Afghan territory to Persia. If we decide to annex Kandahar, I think that in that case Seistan may be safely given to Persia. But I should be sorry to see it given to Persia, unless we intend to give her Herat also. . . . If Her Majesty's Government does not decide to annex Kandahar, then I should extremely regret, and much fear, the cession of Seistan to Persia.'

Although the Government at home did not formally sanction the announcement of a policy of disintegration for many weeks after our military occupation of Kabul, Lord Cranbrook from the first shared Lord Lytton's view that 'Afghanistan as a whole could no longer exist.' It was in reply to this

From Secretary of State, Oct. 12

expressed conviction that Lord Lytton wrote on November 10.

To Lord Cranbrook, Nov. 10

'I do not think you have come a day too soon to the conclusion (in which I entirely concur) that the administrative union of Afghanistan under one central authority is no longer practically possible, and that all our future action must be guided by this conclusion. Taking that point as settled, however, what I mean by *adhesion to the lines of the Gundamuk Treaty* is the policy of endeavouring to secure the objects of that Treaty by relations with the disintegrated Afghan provinces, not involving further annexation on our part, or admitting annexation on the part of any other Power; and what I mean by *advancing beyond these lines* is the policy of seeking the same objects by a partition of Afghanistan, resulting from early negotiations with one or both of the two neighbouring Powers—Persia and Russia.' To this he was opposed.

'With regard to Kandahar, General Stewart and Major St. John are of opinion that Sher Ali Khan, to whom we have temporarily given over the government of Kandahar (where he represents the rule of that branch of the old Durani race still popular apparently in that part of Afghanistan), is well able to hold his own and entirely subject to our control. They, therefore, advise us to place under his authority as large a portion of Western Afghanistan as that authority is competent to cover, with a British cantonment at Peshin, close enough always to support or control his Government whenever necessary. Under this arrangement the Afghan Governor of Kandahar would be not only our nominee but also our tributary; that is to say, he would pay us tribute for the authority delegated to

To Lord Cranbrook, November 10

Policy of an independent Western Afghanistan

him, and thus Western Afghanistan would, without annexation, become one of the tributary States of the Indian Empire. It might, perhaps, be advisable that it should be so called in our State Papers, and so marked upon our maps. It certainly seems preferable that *we* should *receive tribute* from any Afghan authority capable of maintaining *our* interests in Afghanistan, than that *he* should receive from us a subvention for the support of *his own interests*. But, in the details of the Kandahar administration, General Stewart and Major St. John would recommend complete non-interference so long as the tribute is paid. They would, therefore, place no British Resident at Kandahar, where they would have only a British dispensary, and the number of British employés necessary for the requirements of the telegraph and railway when completed. The political officer, who would be our local medium of communication with the Kandahar Government, they would locate, where our cantonment is located, at Peshin. They agree in affirming that our military position would be in no wise strengthened by the annexation or permanent occupation of Kandahar, whilst our current expenditure would be perhaps increased, and our political control over Western Afghanistan weakened, by any such step. I give their conclusions without troubling you in detail with all the arguments on which they are based. These conclusions seem to me sensible and well considered, but they rest on the assumption that no large cession of Afghan territory will be made to Persia in the immediate neighbourhood of Kandahar. . . . Assuming that we do not permanently occupy or administer Kabul, I think it will be advisable to establish a fairly strong British canton-

To Lord Cranbrook November 10

ment at some point rather nearer to Kabul than the Shutargardan, which is at present our most advanced military station on that line. . . .

'If we decide not to annex Kabul, I presume that our object will be to reduce to the utmost, rather than augment, the importance of that place, and assuming the establishment of an advanced British cantonment, say at Kushi, perhaps our best course would be to entrust the administration of Kabul to the most competent and least untrustworthy Sirdar Roberts can recommend for that purpose. His Government, which would have its seat at Kabul, might be advantageously, and I should think without difficulty, extended to Ghuzni and Bamian. These places would thus be brought under an authority subject to our immediate control. . . . With British garrisons within close striking distance of Kabul and Kandahar, their respective Governments would be permanently dependent upon our own, and practically unable to disregard our commands. It is obviously impossible to withdraw our troops from Afghanistan this winter. It would be very inadvisable to withdraw them next spring, when their presence beyond the frontier, after the melting of the snows, will enable us to deal quickly and effectually with those tribes against whom we have long standing scores to pay off. I unreservedly share your conclusion that these tribes will never be good neighbours till they have been well thrashed. However strong their conviction of the reality of our power and the necessity of submission to it, it is with them a point of tribal honour not to submit without compulsion; after which I have little doubt that they will, in course of time, prove just as sensible as other savages have hitherto proved in all other parts of the world of the profits

Withdrawal to be preceded by tribal submission

To Lord Cranbrook, November

Future policy with frontier tribes

and pleasures, when once tasted, of more peaceable pursuits. We can afford to pay them when we have punished them, but not to pay them instead of punishing them, and at the bottom of our present relations with them still lies the old question of mastery which precedes the alliance between the man and the horse—a question which once settled, and well settled, is generally settled for ever. The sooner, therefore, that the necessary preliminary thrashings are got over, the better will it be for all concerned. Hitherto our dealings with the tribal question have been unavoidably checked and restrained by the paramount importance of not disturbing the Afghan question which lay beyond it. That hindrance to effectual action is now withdrawn; and we shall have, next spring, a golden opportunity of thoroughly completing, in two or three months, what may otherwise be the desultory work of as many years and more. For this reason I trust that it will not be necessary to withdraw our troops next spring. But if they are not then withdrawn, it will be impossible to withdraw them next summer without risk of serious injury to their health. I therefore assume that the shortest period within which we can complete the evacuation of Afghanistan will not expire before the autumn of next year. Long ere then General Roberts will, I trust, have visited Bamian, and possibly either he or General Stewart may also be able to visit Ghuzni. I am told that there already exists a short route, susceptible of easy development, from Shutargardan straight to Bamian, which leaves Kabul entirely on one side. Should this turn out to be the case, the establishment of that route would probably bring the great main outpost of the Hindu Kush well within our military

To Lord Cranbrook, November

tether, and thus reduce Kabul to almost complete insignificance. . . . In any case, independently of the information we still require about the resources and conditions of some parts of the country, and on other points similar to those already indicated, I should anticipate very valuable permanent results from our present occupation of Northern and Western Afghanistan if it be prolonged till the autumn of next year. I believe that, when then evacuating the country, we shall probably leave the populations of all the occupied districts not only under a very wholesome sense of the irresistible character of our power, and the folly and danger of trifling with it, but also with a lively and suggestive recognition of the practical benefits derived from the settled order, social security, and commercial fair dealing which everywhere accompany the presence of the British Power. It has been strongly urged upon me, in favour of the annexation or permanent occupation of Kabul, that, whatever construction we ourselves may put upon our evacuation of the captured city, our withdrawal from it will infallibly be regarded by the Afghans as a proof of our inability or fear to retain possession of their capital. I fully admit that if the evacuation of Kabul were an isolated step, and if it were taken prematurely or clumsily, it would most probably have this effect. But if it is taken deliberately, as part of a previously enforced re-settlement of Northern and Western Afghanistan, after our troops have visited Bamian and moved freely about the country in all directions, after that country has been allotted to small separate local Governments, subject to our authority, after Kabul itself has ceased to be the capital of Afghanistan, and when its population will have been dis-

Programme for future of Afghanistan

armed and its fortifications destroyed, *then*, I cannot think that our prestige will in any wise require the permanent occupation of a town which our policy will have reduced to insignificance and which our Generals already consider unsuitable for permanent occupation. . . . The programme thus far indicated would, I think, if successfully carried out give us practical supremacy over Afghan territory up to the Hindu Kush and the Helmund. It would do this, moreover, without any appreciable annexation of Afghan territory, or addition to our present military establishment, and with some slight increase of revenue.'

To Lord Cranbrook, November

Pending the decision of the Government with regard to the future of Afghanistan Lord Lytton felt the urgent necessity of improving as speedily as possible our railway communication with Afghanistan. Work was at once set on foot, designed as part of a general system of frontier railways, and destined, it was hoped, to secure our hold on Kandahar, and to be also of great commercial advantage. This was the construction of a railway from Rukh, on the Indus Valley line, towards Pishin and the Durani capital. The prosecution of the work was supervised with such energy by Sir R. Temple, the Governor of Bombay, that by the middle of November it had been carried forty-five miles beyond Rukh, and on January 14 following the line was opened to Sibi, beyond the Kachi desert, 140 miles from the Indus.[1]

New Frontier Railways

It was not till December 11 that the Secretary of State communicated to the Viceroy the conviction of the Cabinet that the establishment of one Government for the whole of the late kingdom of Afghanistan was no longer possible, and would give no promise

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

of permanence. But while contemplating the establishment of independent native States at Kabul and Kandahar, necessarily under our control, they had seriously to consider the future of the more distant and outlying provinces.

Correspondence with Persia

The correspondence which this year was conducted between the English Foreign Office and the Government of Persia with regard to Herat and Seistan, and to which allusion has been made in the Viceroy's letters, had an important bearing on the policy adopted by the Indian Government concerning Kandahar and the Western States of Afghanistan. These negotiations eventually came to nothing, and need not, therefore, be here detailed; but it is necessary to point out that it was in view of the probability of Herat and Seistan being handed over to the independent power of Persia that Lord Lytton first held it essential for Kandahar to be secured to British control.

While these questions of general policy were under discussion the situation at Kabul was growing more difficult. It has already been stated that upon the report of the committee of inquiry into the Kabul massacres, the Government had decided that Yakub Khan's restoration was impossible. After this decision his continued residence in General Roberts's camp became embarrassing, and the necessary instructions were issued for his removal to India.

Yakub Khan leaves Kabul, December 1

Yakub Khan, who was himself anxious to depart, left Kabul for India on December 1. He arrived at Meerut on December 14, where he was placed under honourable surveillance. He was followed on December 7 by all the sirdars save one, who had been arrested on October 12. They were sent to Lahore as State prisoners. The Mustaufi, however,

was released by General Roberts, being credited with a favourable disposition towards the British Government, while it was hoped that his knowledge and influence might be of use in the management of the country. The departure of the Amir and his ministers was followed by a general rising of the tribes round Kabul. The danger of this had from the first been contemplated by Lord Lytton. On October 21 he had written to Lord Roberts, 'My fear is that when the Afghan people and tribes have fully realised all that is involved in the Amir's abdication they may begin to form hostile combinations, likely ere long to increase our troubles.' By the time the Government had openly resolved to break up the kingdom of Afghanistan into separate states, a ruler for Kandahar had been found in the shape of Sher Ali Khan, but no such figure had as yet appeared in the Northern provinces, and Lord Lytton held, as has been shown, that no peaceful settlement for those provinces could be expected till fresh evidence had been given of the force of our military supremacy. He was not therefore unprepared for the events which now took place.

Rising round Kabul (*Sir Alfred Lyall*)

'Throughout the districts round Kabul the mullahs, or religious teachers, headed by one influential and patriotic preacher (Mushk-i-Alam), proclaimed war against the infidel; and early in December there was a great mustering of the tribes, who threatened Kabul from various points, while true intelligence of their movements became ominously scarce. The clear account given by Roberts of his dispositions for meeting the impending attack, and of the preliminary skirmishing with the converging bodies of the enemy that were gradually surrounding him, will interest all students of British warfare; the

Fighting in the Chardeh Valley

explosive collision occurred in the Chardeh Valley, where a party of cavalry and horse artillery was unexpectedly attacked, while making a reconnaissance, by overwhelming numbers, and forced to retire with some loss upon the entrenchments at Sherpur. The officer in command found himself closely pressed on his left flank, which was also his line of retreat, by a determined enemy who was closing in upon him in such loose order that the fire of his four guns was quite ineffectual.

From Lord Roberts's Narrative (*Forty-one Years in India*)

"It was at this critical moment that I appeared on the scene. Warned by the firing that an engagement was taking place, I galloped across the Chardeh Valley as fast as my horse could carry me, and on gaining the open ground beyond Bhagwana an extraordinary spectacle was presented to my view. An unbroken line, extending for about two miles, and formed of not less than between 9,000 and 10,000 men, was moving rapidly towards me, all on foot save a small body of cavalry on their left flank—in fact, the greater part of Mahomed Jan's army."

'The various groups of clansmen were arrayed under their different banners, like the army of Lars Porsena with its thirty tribal standards at the battle of Lake Regillus; and, to save his guns, Roberts ordered the cavalry to charge.

"But the ground, terraced for irrigation purposes and intersected by dykes, so impeded our cavalry that the charge, heroic as it was, made little or no impression upon the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, now flushed with the triumph of having forced our guns to retire."

'The Afghans rushed on, drawing their knives for close quarters; one gun had to be spiked and abandoned in a water cut, and the artillery fell back, after another stand, until they were stopped "by a

Fighting in the Chardeh Valley

ditch fully twelve feet deep, narrowing towards the bottom," when one gun stuck fast, blocking the others, so that all four guns were for the time lost, and the cavalry could only retire slowly, with great steadiness, by alternate squadrons. The consequence might have been more serious if Macpherson, who was out with a force not far distant, and who marched back at full speed toward the sound of cannon, had not arrived just in time to stop the enemy by throwing the 72nd Highlanders into a gap by which the road passed through the hills immediately overhanging Kabul city.

'This affair, and the handling of overmatched troops in a most perilous predicament, led to much subsequent discussion, but for details we must refer military critics to Lord Roberts's ample narrative. As the Afghans had now seized and fortified the heights above Kabul, which was in their hands, it was resolved to dislodge them from their most formidable position on the crest of the Takht-i-Shar. But the slopes leading up the hillside "were covered with huge masses of jagged rocks, intersected by perpendicular cliffs, while its natural strength was increased by breastworks and stockades;" so that our best troops only drove off the obstinate defenders after a very severe and deadly struggle. Meanwhile, large masses of Afghans were seen coming up in such numbers that the young officer whose station commanded a view of the open valley signalled that the crowd reminded him of Epsom on the Derby Day. Roberts found himself reluctantly compelled to evacuate all his isolated positions, and to withdraw his whole force within the great walled enclosure which he had carefully fortified and provisioned beforehand at Sherpur.

General Roberts withdraws his forces to Sherpur

'A retreat before Afghans, to whom any symptom of wavering is a signal for charging home, is always a hazardous operation; and on this occasion the British General had every reason for anxiety.

"The ground was all in favour of the Afghans, who, unimpeded by impedimenta of any kind, swarmed down upon the mere handful of men retreating before them, shouting cries of victory and brandishing their long knives; but our brave men, inspired by the undaunted bearing of their officers, were absolutely steady. They took up position after position with perfect coolness; every movement was carried out with as much precision as if they were manœuvring on an ordinary field-day; and the killed and wounded were brought away without the slightest hurry or confusion."

'Within Sherpur the British force remained comparatively untroubled for some days, until the dawn of a festival religiously observed by Mohammedans, which fell on December 23.

"The night of the 22nd was undisturbed, save by the songs and cries of the Afghans outside the walls, but just before day the flames of the signal-fire, shooting upwards from the topmost crag of the Asmai range, were plainly to be seen, followed on the instant by a burst of firing."

Final effort of tribesmen successfully repelled

'The enemy, advancing through the dim half-light in heavy masses, was received with volleys of cannon and rifles, until, after the failure of repeated assaults, a flank attack completed his discomfiture. The defence was admirable; nor is it possible to withhold our sympathy and admiration for the devoted gallantry of the Afghans, who, though they were ill armed, undisciplined, and unprotected by artillery, persevered for hours in the hopeless enterprise of storming formidable entrenchments under the

deadly fire that swept the open ground in front, and spent their lives by hundreds in endeavouring to scale the abattis. They perished bravely in their patriotic resolve to dislodge, by one supreme effort, the foreign invader who had fixed himself in the heart of their country.

'When that effort failed, the backbone of the tribal insurrection was broken, and the country round Kabul subsided into sullen tranquillity, although parties sent into the outlying tracts had to fight their way.'[1]

Amnesty proclaimed, December 26

The city of Kabul was re-occupied by the British troops, and on the 26th the amnesty conditional on submission was proclaimed to all concerned in the late events, with the exception of a few specified individuals, whose cases would be reserved for instructions from the Government of India.

Arrangements were made for the temporary administration of the Kabul Province, pending the final orders of Government, by Sirdar Wali Mahomed, and on January 15 he was placed in charge of the city and district of Kabul, when martial law in that district was declared to be at an end.[2]

To Lord Cranbrook, December 9

The Viceroy wrote on December 9 to Lord Cranbrook: 'I have always fully reckoned, as a certainty, upon a general rising of the country about Kabul next spring; and what has now occurred is only unforeseen in so far as it has occurred much sooner than I expected, with less warning, and on a larger scale. . . . However difficult the situation may be, and however heavy the losses which may be inevitably involved in it, I have now implicit confidence that under the present commands things

[1] Sir Alfred Lyall.
[2] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

To Lord Cranbrook, December 9

cannot go radically wrong, that our forces will be well handled, and that with such forces under such officers there is no chance of any irreparable disaster. . . . Meantime what we really want is not more British troops, but a timely addition to the strength of our native army, on which we must at all times mainly depend for military operations or garrison duty in Afghanistan.

Danger of wearing out Native Army

'I consider that our greatest danger at the present moment (and it is, I think, a very real and imminent one) is the danger of wearing out our native army. I do not think we can employ native troops for lengthened periods beyond the North-West Frontier without serious risk of injury to their spirit. While they are actually fighting they will keep in fairly good heart, but what tries and disgusts them is picket and escort duty during the long dead seasons of trans-frontier service, and the unpopularity of such duty amongst the native troops is aggravated by the fact that the burden of it must unavoidably fall on them more heavily than on the Europeans, who are not so well able to stand exposure to the climate.'

December 31 Viceroy resists the demand for big battalions

On December 31 he writes: 'The Anglo-Indian Press has behaved throughout the crisis *ignobly*. In a paroxysm of panic, it has been for the last week daily predicting (with an apparently enthusiastic satisfaction at the prospect) irreparable disasters; and now that all its silly predictions are falsified by the event it systematically ignores our success. I do hope that our military authorities will not encourage the foolish cry (which always re-arises on occasions like this) for "big battalions" in a country where it is almost impossible to feed even small ones. Had I given in to this cry at the outset of the campaign,

what would have been the position of General Roberts during the last week? Absolutely untenable. I should have thought that the disasters of the Russians in the Attrek might have convinced the believers in "big battalions," here and at home, of the irrational character of their clamour as regards warfare in a barren and barbarous country. The Duke of Wellington, I think, said of his Peninsular campaign: "Any General can *fight* an army, few can *feed* one." And the supply difficulties of a Spanish campaign were as nothing to those of an Afghan one. . . . I regard the quiet, methodical rapidity with which, under inconceivably difficult conditions, Roberts has collected at Sherpur five months' food and three months' forage, with abundant firewood for his whole force, and the foresight with which, from the first day of his arrival at Kabul, he has been steadily fortifying that position for defence, as his two greatest military achievements, although doubtless the importance of them will never be fully appreciated by the public. . . . I wish I could strengthen his political staff, and I am trying to do so; but the worst of it is that Afghanistan is a *terra incognita* to all our present politicals. The best of them is comparatively useless in a country which he enters for the first time, and with whose influential people he has not previously established personal relations. What we sorely need is a small picked political service, specially trained for Afghan work—a service of natives as well as Europeans. For in Afghanistan subordinate native agents more or less belonging to the country are invaluable—indeed indispensable—and I cannot find even these native agents fit for employment there.'

To Secretary of State, December 31

Political agents required

The state and prospect of affairs in Afghanistan

at this time presented to the Indian Government some difficult, and possibly dangerous, problems. Kabul and Kandahar, with their lines of communication towards India, were held in strength by British garrisons and posts; and the districts adjoining these two cities were under the control of British officers. But the range of our effective administration or influence went no further; so that the country at large was without a Government, except at Herat, where Ayub Khan, one of Sher Ali's sons, had managed to maintain himself in power. In short, as we held only the ground that was more or less under military occupation, and as we could neither consolidate nor extend our position, the whole course of operations, military and political, was coming to a standstill—a condition that was clearly to our disadvantage, as it inspired no confidence and seemed to invite attack. The Government of India was therefore under the imperative necessity of finding some definite issue from this attitude of pause and uncertainty. The first point of importance was to take some final decision on the case of Yakub Khan, then a political *détenu* in India. After the dispersion of the tribal combination in December, General Roberts had received letters from the leaders, containing a demand for Yakub Khan's restoration, or for the recognition of his son, Musa Khan; and other similar letters had been sent to him from Ghuzni, including one from Musa Khan himself.

Necessity for ending British occupation of Kabul

Yakub Khan's abdication proclaimed irrevocable

The Viceroy, with the approval of the Secretary of State, instructed General Roberts to proclaim in Kabul that Yakub Khan's abdication was irrevocable, and this was accordingly done. The opportunity was taken to declare to the Afghans that no large territorial annexations were contemplated, and that

the British Government were quite willing to recognise a friendly ruler at Kabul selected by the people themselves.

In a private letter to Lord Cranbrook, dated January 20, 1880, the Viceroy explained the reasons for which Yakub Khan had been set aside, and also sketched out the lines upon which he desired to proceed in dealing with the general question of the future constitution of a Government or Governments in Afghanistan :—

To Lord Cranbrook, January 20, 1880

'As regards Yakub Khan. I consider his restoration to be out of the question. The reasons which, in my opinion, render it impossible are twofold. The main one is that the blood of Cavagnari is on his hands. The committee appointed by me at Calcutta under the presidency of Mr. Rivers Thompson has taken, as you will have seen, a lenient view of the Amir's case; but it does not, and cannot, absolve him from all responsibility for the death of those whose lives it is certain he might have preserved had he chosen to do so. For my part, I sympathise with those officers at Peshawur who refused to shake hands with Yakub Khan when he arrived there on his way to India; and, as Cavagnari's personal friend, nothing on earth will ever induce me to aid in restoring to power the man whose hand is imbued in Cavagnari's blood. If Her Majesty's Government think otherwise on this point—and it is one on which I anticipate that our decision will be denounced by the Opposition—I must resign. There will be no help for it. But I am confident that Her Majesty's Government will not think otherwise. Putting aside all personal feelings, it seems to me that every consideration of policy and common sense is conclusive against the restoration of Yakub Khan.

To Lord Cranbrook, January 20, 1880

In the first place, you will notice that the insurgent leaders treat the massacre of the whole British embassy as an unfortunate, but natural and rather trivial, accident which could not be helped, and about which it is absurd to make such a fuss. The suddenly altered language of Yakub Khan himself is also pitched in this key. Now, I am sure you will agree with me that the first duty of the Government of India in this matter is to make the Afghan people understand once for all, and for ever, that the murder of British Envoys is not a trivial accident, but a most heinous crime, for which all concerned in it will suffer severely. It is to effect this object that our forces have re-entered Afghanistan. It is the complete attainment of this object which seems to me the first guarantee for any better understanding or relation with the Afghan people, and assuredly this object will never be attained if the British Government by its action in restoring the Amir, under whose protection our Envoy was murdered, were to acquiesce in the view taken of that murder by the writers of these letters, and apparently more or less by the ex-Amir himself. In the next place, the basis on which we have now deliberately settled our present Afghan policy is the disintegration of the late Afghan kingdom. . . . But if Yakub Khan either could not or would not loyally carry out the mild terms of the Treaty of Gundamuk; if he and his friends now say that we were fools to expect from him the loyal fulfilment of such terms, although, when he signed them, he was a free agent; if he now repudiates the abdication which he was thrice asked to withdraw at the time when he made it; if he declares, as he has declared, that this abdication was extorted from him by ungenerous and cruel pressure, and that we

Arguments against the restoration of Yakub Khan

To Lord Cranbrook, January 20, 1880

have no right to hold him to it and no reason to expect him to abide by it: is it conceivable that he, now virtually a State prisoner at Meerut, should, if restored by us to the throne of Kabul, abide one moment longer than he can possibly help by the terms of any agreement with us, however solemnly ratified, that is based on the dismemberment of his kingdom, the permanent alienation of two of its fairest provinces,[1] and the gift of one of them, by a foreign Power, to such an hereditary and hated rival as Persia? He might be treacherous enough, perhaps, to sign such an agreement, but it could not last. If he adhered to it, his Sirdars would rightly despise him as the representative of an unprecedented series of national humiliations. They would soon cabal against him; and, if we were not prepared once more to intervene and support in arms this worthless creature against the contempt and indignation of all his subjects, he would swiftly be swept away by them. On the other hand, if, as soon as restored by us to the throne of a diminished kingdom, he openly repudiated, or practically evaded, the conditions on which we had restored him, we should have again to intervene for the vindication of a violated treaty against a sovereign who might, perhaps, be enthusiastically supported by the whole fighting power of the country, and in a cause for which we could not possibly expect any sympathy from any party in Afghanistan. Every one of the arguments now put forth to excuse the disregard of the Gundamuk engagement, and the withdrawal of the Kabul abdication, could then be urged against us with infinitely greater truth and justice; and the British Government would, in my opinion, be deservedly covered

[1] Kandahar and Herat.

To Lord Cranbrook, January 20, 1880

with derision and contempt as the threefold dupe of its own stupidity, the betrayer of its own cause, and the renegade of its most sacred duty to the dead as well as to the living. Assuming, therefore, the absolute impossibility of restoring Yakub Khan to power at the demand of those who have signed the letters to General Roberts, and recognising also the impossibility of keeping him at Meerut without needlessly vexatious restrictions on his liberty and that of his household, I propose to remove him as soon as possible to Ootacamund, or to some station in the Neilgherries, where I think he would be out of harm's way. . . . I think that if Yakub is removed to the furthest possible distance from the Afghan frontier, no avoidable restrictions should be placed on his liberty. Precautions should be taken to prevent his escape; but, subject to such precautions, I would propose to allow him every possible comfort and personal liberty.'[1]

In South Afghanistan, the news of the insurrection around Kabul and the general feeling of suspense in regard to our eventual policy, had alarmed Sirdar Sher Ali Khan, who governed with our support at Kandahar, and some clear declaration of our intentions became urgently required. Accordingly, with the approval of the Secretary of State, the Government of India now decided publicly to announce to Sirdar Sher Ali Khan that the province of Kandahar would be permanently detached from Kabul, and placed under his hereditary rulership, and that we would pledge ourselves to give him military support. This decision was communicated by General Stewart to the Sirdar, who accepted with

[1] Yakub Khan is living under surveillance at Mussourie in India.—B.B. May 20, 1899.

gratitude the arrangement, but earnestly desired that the British auxiliary force should be cantoned within the immediate neighbourhood of the city. On April 1, 1880, Sir Donald Stewart, who had commanded at Kandahar since its occupation in 1879, started for Kabul; and it was left for Colonel St. John, the political Resident, to deliver to the Sirdar a letter from the Viceroy, announcing to him that he had been recognised as the independent ruler of the province of Kandahar. This important State paper was afterwards formally presented to him in the presence of a large assemblage of notables. In the speech which Colonel St. John then made he used these words: 'In order that this condition of peace and prosperity may continue, and that it may not return to its former state of poverty and wretchedness, the Government of England has decided to restore it to its ancient independence under the most worthy and capable descendant of its former Governor, the Sirdar of Kandahar, whose rule only ceased twenty-five years ago. Under the just government of Wali Sher Ali Khan, and under the protection of England, Kandahar will, if it pleases God, remain for ever free from foreign oppression, and will rise to such a height of wealth and prosperity that it will be the envy of the whole of Islam.'

Treaty with Wali Sher Ali of Kandahar, April

The Wali made a short speech in reply, expressive of his own unworthiness and his gratitude to the English Government. The Viceroy's presents were then brought forward and uncovered. The first, consisting of a sword mounted in blue velvet and silver with a heavy gold embroidered belt, was buckled round the Wali's waist by General Primrose, upon which His Highness said that he trusted he might have an opportunity of showing his readiness to draw

Treaty of Wali Sher Ali of Kandahar

it in the cause of the British Government. Colonel St. John then placed a diamond-studded repeater watch and gold chain round His Highness's neck, and presented him with the rest of the gifts. The Guard of Honour presented arms, and a salute of twenty-one guns was fired by the artillery. His Highness then received the congratulations of all present, and the Kazi and Mullahs offered a prayer in Pushtu, expressive of thanks to God and exhortation to the Wali to govern justly. To this he replied in the same language, exhorting them also to do their duty in keeping the people in the right way. The ceremony then ended.

In public everything had gone off well, but in the new ruler's domestic circle matters were not quite so harmonious. It subsequently transpired that after leaving the assemblage the Wali retired to his private apartments, where he took off his dress of ceremony, and, after placing a black rag (expressive of humility) on his head, offered up open prayers to God for having elevated him to so exalted a position, vowing at the same time to be faithful to the British Government which had so honoured him. This produced an outburst of wrath from his niece and from one of his father's widows, who abused him for joining the infidels and for daring to compare himself with his ancestors. The Wali's favourite wife took his part, and there was a violent quarrel.[1]

Mr. Lepel Griffin goes to Kabul, the end of March

In North Afghanistan, the prospect of any definite settlement seemed, at the beginning of 1880, to be still distant and unpromising, and the Viceroy's anxiety to terminate a provisional military occupation was increasing. As one step towards a solution of the complications at Kabul, he deputed Mr. (now Sir) Lepel Griffin to undertake the whole

[1] *Narative of Events in Afghanistan.*

diplomatic and administrative superintendence of affairs and negotiations, in subordinate consultation with the military commander. Mr. Griffin reached Kabul at the end of March, where he was cordially welcomed by Sir Frederick Roberts; and the Viceroy embodied in a Minute the lines which he was to follow and the objects at which he was to aim in assuming this most important political charge.

**Viceroy's Minute on policy to be adopted in Northern Afghanistan**

In this Minute the Viceroy stated that in the main the frontier acquired by the Treaty of Gundamuk was satisfactory, and that further extensions of territory were not desired, but that our principle of future policy in Afghanistan must be based on the disintegration of that country and its division into three or more separate provinces. It would be necessary to retain a British garrison at or near Kandahar, but no alteration of our frontier line on this side was contemplated. Before attempting any political settlement of Northern Afghanistan it had been thought necessary to assert our military powers beyond all possibility of question, and for this purpose arrangements were then in progress for the early concentration around Kabul of a military force sufficient, it was believed, to establish our military command. The Viceroy was afraid of the general harvest, and he felt it most important that the political situation in Northern Afghanistan should be finally settled before the crops had been gathered in and the cultivators set free, or the restless spirits had grown tired of inaction.

Four courses were now open to the Government: (1) annexation, (2) military occupation, (3) temporary occupation until the secure establishment of a friendly ruler, and (4) withdrawal from the country as soon as circumstances permitted. Of these the fourth

seemed to the Viceroy the only one in accordance with our previous declarations, and likely to produce a safe and comparatively speedy settlement without greatly irritating the people of the country, entailing enormous additional cost to the finances of India, and placing a heavy strain on her army.

Viceroy's Minute to Mr. Lepel Griffin, March 1880

'It is true,' he went on to say, 'that we contemplate the permanent retention of a garrison at Kandahar. But the conditions of the two provinces are very different. The Kandahar population is a less turbulent, warlike, and fanatical one, and that country is less favourable to guerilla warfare. With only the moral support of our presence, the Governor, Sher Ali, has hitherto found no difficulty in preserving the peace of the province and maintaining his authority there, and we may reasonably hope that this authority will be strengthened rather than weakened as time goes on. Moreover, on this side our present lines of communication run through a friendly country, whose inhabitants have shown that they appreciate the ties of interest by which they are bound to us; and we may hope shortly to see the long and difficult road connecting Kandahar with the Indus replaced, for most of its course at least, by a railway which will alike secure our hold on the districts it traverses and develop their resources. For these reasons neither the location of our small garrison at Quettah in 1876, nor the maintenance now of a permanent military force at Kandahar, can afford any measure of the task involved in a military occupation of Kabul.'

Viceroy's views on policy to be adopted

While admitting that much might be said in favour of the course of continuing our military occupation at Kabul until we ourselves had firmly established on the throne a friendly ruler, whom we

should not leave till he could reign safely without our support, this policy had to his mind one fatal objection—want of finality. It would be impossible to foresee how long our troops would have to remain there, and he doubted whether a time would ever come when their withdrawal would not be followed by a temporary period of anarchy. The course, therefore, which he now advocated over all other courses was 'to effect the withdrawal of our forces from Afghanistan by next autumn at the latest, making the best political arrangements that circumstances admit for carrying out this withdrawal and for the future administration of the country.' This was assuming that no change would take place in the relative positions of England and Russia in Central Asia.

**Viceroy's Minute to Mr. Lepel Griffin, March 1880**

Help other than purely military, he thought, might safely be given to a successful candidate for the throne of Kabul. Giving money and arms to a powerful ruler of United Afghanistan was simply to feed with fuel the fire of an enemy and enable him the more effectively to rule independently of British influence, but to give such help to the ruler of the comparatively small and poor province which was all that would be left to Kabul when Kandahar, Herat, and Turkestan were separated from it would have the effect of binding him to our interests, since his success as a ruler would be dependent upon such help. 'Such a subsidy, too, while binding the chief to our interests, would not tend to raise up enemies against him, as any more active interference undoubtedly would, and, if accompanied by gifts or allowances from us to those chiefs who show themselves favourably disposed, it might do something to strengthen our influence concurrently with his authority.'

In relation to the withdrawal of our forces, the most important question to be decided was where the permanent cantonment should be placed. His own opinion was strongly in favour of returning to the positions taken up in the Treaty of Gundamuk. Now that Kabul was to be reduced to a comparatively insignificant province the necessity no longer existed for the maintenance at or near Kabul of an Envoy with a garrison, and he considered that our ends would be best served by withdrawing to some suitable point from which it would be possible to strike at Kabul when required. For this purpose the old Kurum cantonment seemed to him better than any other site. He doubted whether the obstacles to this route in winter were greater than the obstacles to the Jellalabad route in summer.

**Viceroy's Minute to Mr. Lepel Griffin, March 1880**

He added: 'As regards communications, I understand from the competent engineer by whom it has been inspected that it would be impossible to carry a railway through the Khyber, except at a cost which practically puts it out of the question.[1] If, therefore, a cantonment were established at Gundamuk, the long and difficult communication with Peshawur would always have to be maintained by road. On the other hand, I am informed that a line will actually be opened to Kushalghur by July or August of this year; and from there to Kurum, excepting the bridging of the Indus, there is no serious engineering difficulty. I do not undervalue the political importance of Jellalabad, but I cannot but see that the retention of that district not only entails very great additional political responsibilities, but also the permanent occupation in strength of the most deadly line of posts that we have yet occupied

[1] This is not the present view.

in India—Peshawur, the Khyber, Dakka, and Jellalabad.

Viceroy's Minute to Mr. Lepel Griffin, March 1880

'In reviewing the results of an early withdrawal from Kabul if undertaken as a measure independent of the stability of the political settlement effected there, it is necessary to take into consideration the probable effect of such a course on the public mind in India and at home. In India I do not think it would be misunderstood; it would be generally recognised that our presence at Kabul was forced on us, not sought, and that our mission was rather one of retributive vindication than of conquest, and any ill effect produced by apparent evidence of weakness would, I think, be neutralised by the evidence given of our earnest desire to abstain from annexation. At home it would be less favourably viewed; and our retirement without having established a settled Government, or left a strong and friendly ruler at Kabul, would be treated by all opponents of our policy as a confession of failure. That it would not be an altogether satisfactory termination I admit. But while critics of the present judge generally by what has not been done, future critics will judge more fairly by what has been done. In 1876 the two great passes of the Bolan and the Khyber, as well as the minor one of Kohat, were closed to us. At a time of nominal peace, no European's life was safe a mile beyond our border, Kutchi was a devastated desert, Beloochistan a scene of continued anarchy and bloodshed, Kandahar suffering under the tyranny of Kabul, whither its revenue was obtained for the maintenance of an excessive army; and immediately opposite us was growing up a great hostile military power, daily drawing further from us and nearer to Russia.

Viceroy's Minute to Mr. Lepel Griffin, March 1880

'Now the passes are open, and daily traversed by numbers; our officers move freely over parts of the border. Kutchi is becoming a rich agricultural district traversed by a railway; Beloochistan is peaceful, prosperous and friendly; Kandahar thriving under the Governorship of its own natural chief, and likely soon to be connected with India by railway; and that great threatening military power on our northern border is utterly broken up and dispersed. Some time must yet elapse before the full benefit of our exertions and of our expenditure of blood and money can be reaped, and during this time our efforts cannot be relaxed. But a consideration of what has already been effected may well make us confident of the ultimate results of a policy steadily adhered to through difficulties abroad, and misrepresentation and party opposition at home.'

To Mr. Griffin, February 16

On February 16 the Viceroy wrote to Mr. Griffin: 'I see no reason why you should not, as soon as you reach Kabul, set about the preparation of a way for us out of that rat-trap, by making known to all whom such knowledge chiefly concerns the cardinal points of our policy, viz:

'1st. Non-restoration of the ex-Amir.

'2nd. Permanent severance of Western from North-West Afghanistan.

'3rd. Neither annexation nor permanent occupation of the latter.

'4th. Willingness to recognise any ruler (except Yakub) whom the Afghans themselves will empower to arrange with us on their behalf, for the restoration of their country and its evacuation by our troops.'

In the same letter he informs Mr. Griffin that it was intended that Sir Donald Stewart, when replaced

at Kandahar from Bombay, should with the whole of his present force return to India through Ghuzni. He was not to occupy Ghuzni or linger there, but, passing through it and overcoming all opposition by the way, to march as rapidly as he could upon Kabul.

**To Lord Cranbrook, February 18**

Writing to Lord Cranbrook on February 18, the Viceroy says: 'The sole object of all the military operations I have sanctioned for this spring is to facilitate the early evacuation of the country. But to retire in the presence of the powerful hostile forces now actually holding the field against us would be a shameful and dangerous folly, and I do not think any Viceroy could take the responsibility of giving or carrying out such an order. It is of course impossible to speak with complete confidence or positiveness about a situation so uncertain as that with which we are still dealing in Northern Afghanistan, but I still reckon on the evacuation of the country about the autumn of this year, and I hope to effect the withdrawal of Stewart's force by the Shutargardan before the end of the spring.'

**Abdul Rahman**

While the Viceroy was thus deliberating over the difficulty of leaving North Afghanistan masterless and unsettled, the prospect of a new and unforeseen solution of these complications was offered by the appearance at Balkh, on the Oxus frontier, of Abdul Rahman. The father of this Sirdar was Mahomed Afzul Khan, Amir Sher Ali's elder half-brother, who had actually ruled in Kabul from May 1866 to October 1867. After his death the civil war for succession in Afghanistan had broken out again, and after some vicissitudes Sher Ali succeeded in establishing his authority; whereupon Abdul Rahman retired, first to the Turkestan districts, and eventually took refuge,

in 1870, with the Russians at Tashkend. He made several attempts to obtain their aid and countenance for another campaign against Sher Ali, but ineffectually, and he was compelled to reside as a political refugee, in receipt of an allowance, beyond the Oxus till 1880, when he seems to have obtained permission from the Russian Government to try his chances once more in Afghanistan. His own account of the matter is as follows:

Abdul Rahman's own story

'For the first seven years of my stay with the Russians they insisted on my absolutely holding no communication with Afghanistan, on the plea that they were under treaty obligations with the English to abstain from interference in Afghanistan. After that they told me that Sher Ali Khan had formed friendship with them, and consequently they could not permit me to disturb the equanimity of their friend. When Sher Ali attacked Maimena I again begged permission to leave, but was refused. Thus treated, at the death of Sher Ali Khan I contemplated making my escape secretly. Before my plans were matured, the Russians heard of my intentions, and forcibly removed me and my family to Tashkend. When telegraphic news of the deportation of Yakub Khan by the English was received, General Kaufmann was at Orenburg. His secretary at Tashkend sent for me and said:

'"You have always been anxious to return to your country. The English have removed Yakub Khan to Hindustan; the opportunity is favourable. If you wish to go, you are at liberty to do so." Remarking that I would think over the matter, I came away. Some three days later, the secretary again sent for me and said:

'"What are you thinking about? Why do you

Abdul Rahman's own story

not go? If you fail it does not matter much, you can return to us and your present allowances. You will not again get such an opportunity; if you wish to go, go now. You surely will be able to drive out General Ghulam Haidar, and establish yourself in Turkestan.'

'I represented that I had no arms, horses, trappings, or money. It was finally arranged, after communication by wire with General Kaufmann, that I should be supplied with 200 breech-loading rifles and 100 rounds of ball ammunition per rifle, trappings and accoutrements for 100 foot and 100 mounted men. When leaving I was presented with 5,000 Bokhara tillas. This sum and the money I originally had, together with what I had managed to save out of my allowance, is all that I started with.

'The Russians pressed me most strongly to leave. They said I could not leave soon enough. I have entered into no written or secret engagement with the Russians. I am bound to them by no oath or promise, but simply by feelings of gratitude, and consequently I should never like to be obliged to fight them. I have eaten their salt and was for twelve years dependent on their hospitality, and during that time, though often annoyed, I never misconducted myself or forgot my duty to them. The assistance given to me in arms, animals, money, &c., has been considered as a loan, which I will have to repay. The rifles have been valued at twenty-five roubles each. If I am fortunate enough to be made Amir, I will desire nothing better than to be allowed to pass the remainder of my days in peace. I left Tashkend with 100 followers, and travelled *viâ* Oratippa, Karategin, Hissar, Kolab, and crossed the Oxus at Rustack.'[1]

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

The earliest rumours of Abdul Rahman's arrival in Afghanistan came to the British authorities in the first days of March 1880; and almost simultaneously it was found that his mother, then living at Kandahar, had received letters indicating that he might not be unfavourably disposed towards negotiations with the English Government. The project of treating with Abdul Rahman for the restoration of government in North Afghanistan is understood to have originated with Major St. John, who was at the moment in India with the Viceroy; and Lord Lytton, perceiving its advantages, immediately acted upon the suggestion. On March 6 he wrote to Mr. Griffin at Kabul, referring to the letters received by the Sirdar's family at Kandahar, saying, 'This communication indicates possibilities, and in any case suggests considerations which may, I think, have the most important practical bearing on the early solution of the very difficult problem you are about to deal with in North Afghanistan.' He proceeded to point out that Abdul Rahman fulfilled all the conditions required in a chief to whom might be transferred the rulership of the country, from which it was eminently desirable that our troops should speedily withdraw, and he accordingly decided that conciliatory messages should be sent to the Sirdar, both from Kabul and from Kandahar, as soon as it should be certain that he was in Afghan territory. These instructions were sanctioned by the Home Government, although not without some hesitation and misgivings as to the advisability of treating with a chief who had been so long connected with Russia, and accordingly on April 1 a letter from Kabul was addressed to the Sirdar and sent by a confidential messenger.

Suggestion that Abdul Rahman should be made Amir

Before his arrival several documents addressed

by Abdul Rahman to different persons came into the hands of the British authorities at Kabul. One of these, addressed to the principal chiefs of Kohistan, took very high ground. It appealed to the honour and glory of Islam and the dignity of the Kingdom of Afghanistan, and stated that the Sirdar had arrived to save it from the misery and degradation into which it had fallen, and was ready with this object to head a religious war and march on Kabul, although he was content to be at peace with the English if only they would accede to his representations.

The Afghan troops generally rose in favour of the new comer, and Lord Lytton began to fear that the time might slip by when we were in a position to dictate terms to him, rather than to listen to his requests backed up by a strong national party.

Writing to the Secretary of State on April 12 he said:

To Secretary of State, April 12

'You will remember that more than a month ago I urged the expediency of sending to (Abdul Rahman), while his strength was still weak and his position still uncertain, a public deputation from the Kabul Sirdars to offer him, with the open connivance of the British Government, the throne of Kabul, which we were then in a position to assign to him upon our own terms.

'The situation has within the last three weeks changed very considerably in favour of Abdul Rahman, and my present fear is that the wrecks and refuse of the Ghuzni faction will ere long rally to his standard, placing him in a position to appear suddenly before Kabul at the head of a united nation, and dictate terms to us, instead of accepting them from us.'

Sir Donald Stewart and his force left Kandahar

Sir Donald Stewart's victories before Ghuzni

on April 1, and occupied Ghuzni on the 21st, after a severe action on the 19th with the tribesmen, a large body of whom charged the British troops with great gallantry, but without success. The division only remained three days at Ghuzni, leaving Sirdar Mahomed Alam Khan, the uncle of Musa Khan, in charge of a provisional Government. A force was sent from Kabul to co-operate with the Kandahar force, the main body of which under General Ross encountered no serious opposition. A small contingent, however, under Colonel Jenkins was attacked, but unsuccessfully, by a formidable gathering at Charasiab. The Kabul and Kandahar forces joined on April 28, and Sir Donald Stewart arrived at Kabul on May 2, and as senior officer assumed from Sir F. Roberts the chief command, as well as political control.

To Lord Cranbrook, April 27

'Stewart,' wrote Lord Lytton, 'has gained two victories before Ghuzni, one of them a very brilliant and decisive one, and Jenkins has had a most successful engagement at Charasiab. These military successes leave us masters of the political position, if we do not hastily throw away our advantages.'

On April 21 our messenger to Abdul Rahman returned to Kabul with a letter from that Sirdar which the Viceroy characterised as very friendly and very clever. Writing to Lord Cranbrook on April 27 he says: 'We have found in Abdul Rahman a ram caught in the thicket.' His letter, obviously dictated by Russian advisers, professed warm friendship with us, provided we did not impose on him conditions which he could not accept without apparent ingratitude to Russia, 'whose salt he had eaten,' and proposed that 'Afghanistan should be neutralised and placed under the joint protectorate of the British and Russian Empires.' Lord Lytton

comments upon this, 'I feel sure that Abdul Rahman's letter was composed for him in the belief that we should, according to our invariable custom, reply to it by indicating conditions which, if contested, would furnish matter for lengthened negotiation, and that we should haggle and barter about the terms of our future relations with him. This would have ended in his dictating his own terms and remaining master of the situation. Our position would have been that of gamblers sitting down at 10 o'clock to break the bank with the knowledge that, whether they win or lose, they must leave off playing at 12 o'clock.' Lord Lytton, therefore, was in favour of immediately informing Abdul Rahman that whilst, 'if he would not share the fate of Sher Ali, he must put out of his head both the acquisition of Kandahar, which we would never restore, and the Anglo-Russian protectorate, which we would never tolerate in a country acknowledged by Russia to be beyond the legitimate sphere of her action; on the other hand, we were ready to hand over to him *at once, without any provisions at all*, Kabul and all the rest of the country if he would come and receive it from us. But that our troops would in any case be withdrawn not later than October,' when Kabul would probably be 'jumped' by the leader of the Ghuzni party if he were not previously on the spot to secure the reversion of it with our assistance.

To Lord Cranbrook, April 27

These views were communicated to Mr. Griffin in a letter from Mr. Lyall, the Foreign Secretary to the Indian Government, dated April 27. 'The single object,' this letter stated, 'to which the Afghan policy of this Government has at all times been directed and limited is the security of the North-Western Frontier of India.' The intrusion of any

Letter from Mr. Lyall to Mr. Griffin, April 27

Mr. Lyall to Mr. Griffin, April 27

foreign influence into the great border State of Afghanistan had always been held, and must always be held, incompatible with that security. For long our endeavour had been to find in the friendship and strength of the rulers of Afghanistan the requisite guarantee for the security of our own frontier. Failing in that endeavour, our object must be to establish the security of our frontier independently of such conditions. The letter continues:

'This conclusion was not accepted without reluctance. Not even when forced into hostilities by the late Amir Sher Ali Khan's espousal of a Russian alliance proposed by Russia in contemplation of a rupture with the British Government, did we relinquish our desire for the renewal of relations with a strong and friendly Afghan power; and when the sons of Sher Ali subsequently sought our alliance and protection, they were at once accorded to him on conditions of which His Highness professed to appreciate the generosity. The crime, however, which dissolved the Treaty of Gundamuk, and the disclosures which followed that event, finally convinced the Government of India that the interests committed to its care could not but be gravely imperilled by further adhesion to a policy dependent for its fruition on the gratitude, the good faith, the assumed self-interest, or the personal character of any Afghan prince.

'When, therefore, Her Majesty's troops re-entered Afghanistan in September last, it was with two well defined and plainly avowed objects. The first was to avenge the treacherous massacre of the British mission at Kabul; the second was to maintain the safeguards sought through the Treaty of Gundamuk,

by providing for their maintenance guarantees of a more substantial and less precarious character.

Mr. Lyall to Mr. Griffin April 27

'These two objects have been attained—the first by the capture of Kabul and the punishment of the crime committed there, the second by the severance of Kandahar from the Kabul power.

'Satisfied of their attainment, the Government of India has no longer any motive or desire to enter into fresh treaty engagements with the ruler of Kabul. The arrangements and exchange of friendly assurance with the Amir Sher Ali, though supplemented on the part of the Government by subsidies and favours of various kinds, wholly failed to secure the object of them, which was nevertheless a thoroughly friendly one, and no less conducive to the security and advantage of the Afghan than to those of the British power. The treaty with Yakub Khan, which secured to him our friendship and material support, was equally ineffectual. Moreover, recent events and arrangements have fundamentally changed the situation to which our correspondence and engagements with the Amir of Afghanistan formerly applied. Our advanced frontier positions at Kandahar and Kurum have so materially diminished the political importance to the paramount objects of our policy, that we no longer require to maintain British agents in any part of his dominions.'

The letter then goes on to say that the victory over the armed gatherings near Ghuzni, and the appearance of Abdul Rahman as a candidate for the throne of Kabul, whose claim the Government of India has no cause to oppose, and the majority of the population seemed willing to support, removed the only two reasons which had prevented an even earlier

withdrawal of our troops. The answer to be sent to Abdul Rahman is then dictated in the sense of Lord Lytton's letter already quoted.

Mr. Griffin to Abdul Rahman, April 30

Mr. Griffin thereupon addressed a letter to Abdul Rahman, on April 30, in general accordance with these instructions, but specific reference to Kandahar or to a fixed date for the evacuation of Kabul was omitted on the suggestion of Sir Frederick Roberts and Mr. Griffin—in the one case because mention of Herat would also be necessary, in the other lest the Sirdar should be induced to temporise.

The letter urged upon Abdul Rahman the importance of a prompt decision, and added that at no place but Kabul could final arrangements be satisfactorily and quickly made.

The terms of this letter were not thought altogether satisfactory by the Viceroy, who wrote to Sir Donald Stewart at Kabul on May 16 :—

Viceroy to Sir Donald Stewart, May 16

'Our position is really a very simple and perfectly plain one—it requires no finessing, and, as I understand and have stated it, it distinctly excludes not only all negotiations or bargaining with Abdul Rahman, but also all pretence of establishing a friendly Amir at Kabul. It is not our business or function to establish any Amir at all; and it would be sheer folly to rely upon his friendship, or any arrangements for rendering our interest dependent on such friendship, or any arrangements devised for the purpose of securing it. Our position is, that having now completed our own arrangements for rendering our interests independent of such friendship, and having defeated every attack upon us, we are about to evacuate Northern Afghanistan without delay; and we give notice of this intention to Abdul Rahman, not because we have any bargain to drive

with him about it, but in order that, if he wishes to take advantage of it in any manner not inimical to us, he may lose no time in doing so.

'The above mentioned arrangements are of course the irrevocable separation of Kandahar from the Kabul Power, and the permanent retention and strengthening of the frontier positions secured to us by the Treaty of Gundamuk. Though these are doubtless known to Abdul Rahman, I think that the irrevocable nature of them should be in fairness distinctly explained to him. I consented with reluctance to Griffin's strong recommendation supported by Lyall to omit from his first letter to that Sirdar all reference either to these arrangements or to the date of our evacuation; but I cannot approve his allusions to the "establishment of a friendly Amir at Kabul." Our position is a strong one so long as we avow it plainly and act on it firmly. Otherwise it may become a very false one.'

These negotiations, however, were not to be carried to their conclusion under Lord Lytton's administration, which was now drawing to a close.

The arrival of Sir Donald Stewart at Kabul coincided with a change of administration in England. On April 28 the Government of Lord Beaconsfield was succeeded by that of Mr. Gladstone, Viscount Cranbrook being replaced as Secretary of State for India by the Marquess of Hartington. Lord Lytton's policy in India had been made the subject of bitter attack by the party who now came into power, and he therefore resigned office with his political friends. The Marquis of Ripon was appointed his successor as Viceroy of India.

**Mr. Gladstone succeeds Lord Beaconsfield, April 26**

**Lord Lytton resigns**

On April 7 Lord Lytton wrote to Lord Cranbrook:

*From Lord Lytton to Viscount Cranbrook*

[*Private*] 'Calcutta: April 7, 1880.

To Lord Cranbrook, April 7

My dear Lord Cranbrook,—It seems scarcely worth while to write to you by this mail about affairs. I know not in what circumstances my letter will find you; but it seems probable that before you get it you will have ceased to be Secretary of State and I shall have ceased to be Viceroy. What an unaccountable collapse. . . . I suppose that my successor, whoever he be, can scarcely reach India before June, which will be a very trying season for his journey as well as for mine. But it is extremely desirable that he should relieve me without any avoidable delay. For the safe solution of the Afghan question now seems likely to depend on the management during the next two months of arrangements at Kandahar and negotiations at Kabul, which can neither be suspended nor postponed with impunity, nor yet satisfactorily conducted by a Viceroy notoriously destitute of the confidence and support of the Queen's constitutional advisers. If the new ministry breaks the pledges we have given Sher Ali Khan, or swallows the bait likely to be laid for it by Abdul Rahman of a neutralised Afghanistan under joint guarantees, it will be an evil day for India and for England too. But I will not paint the devil on the wall. I trust, dear Lord Cranbrook, that those personal relations between us which to me have been such pleasant ones may survive their official ties, and that on my return to England you will still allow me to regard you as a political, though no longer an official, chief. I assure you I shall always recall with the liveliest gratitude the encouraging confidence and generous support with which you

have honoured me during a very critical and anxious period of my Indian administration.

To Sir James Stephen he wrote:

*From Lord Lytton to Sir James Fitzjames Stephen*

[*Private*] 'Calcutta: April 7, 1880.

To Sir James Stephen, April 7

'My dear Stephen,—Were you ever in the Forest of Arden? I have always fancied it must be the most charming place in the world, more especially in summer time. I shall shortly be on my way to it, I think, and I hasten to give you rendezvous at the Court of the Banished Duke. If you meet our friend, the melancholy Jacques, greet him from me most lovingly, and tell him—*Ducdame!*—that all the fools are now in the circle and he need pipe to them no more. Tell him 'tis found to be a magic circle, which works wonders. Once in it the fools become the wise, whilst out of it wisdom is labelled folly. Tell him that young jade, Democracy, has borrowed from Fortune her wheel and bandage; and that out of Arden Wood the game now in fashion is chuck-farthing with empires for counters. If that fool Touchstone has not already joined the others now dancing in motley to the tune of *Ducdame! ducdame!* let him know that I bring him the end of the tale he found hanging by that "prodigious pippin" which rots when it ripens; tell him he must sell his old dial, get himself a brand new watch from Birmingham, and so be up to the time of day, if he would not be trampled by all the acorned hogs when they cry Oh! and mount. And tell your own great heart, dear and true friend, that the joy I take from the prospect of seeing you is more precious to me than all that Providence has

taken from the fancy prospect I had painted on the blank wall of the Future of bequeathing to India the supremacy of Central Asia and the revenues of a first-class Power.'

*From Lord Lytton to Viscount Cranbrook*

'Simla: April 20, 1880.

To Lord Cranbrook, April 20

'My dear Lord Cranbrook,—I fear that this reply to your very welcome letter of the 21st ultimo will find you *functus officio*. As for myself, I am still waiting for the fiat of the new Downing Street divinities; but, like Falstaff, "I would it were bed-time, and all were over." In these circumstances our official correspondence becomes rather anomalous, but by force of habit I shall continue the thread, or rather "the tape," of it, till I receive authentic information that your resignation and my own have been accepted by the Queen. I do not think that my successor could, without serious risk to his health, come out earlier than next autumn, for till then the plains of India will be hotter than the furnaces of Nebuchadnezzar; and if Her Majesty's new ministers wish me to carry on this Government till I can personally transfer it to the new Viceroy I shall deem it a public duty to do so, provided only that during the interval, which must be virtually a sort of interregnum, I am not required to carry out measures to which it would be obviously impossible for me to set my hand. Certainly there could scarcely be a worse or more dangerous moment than the present for any radical change of Government in India; and, as in the conduct of this Government I have never had any other feeling than a most earnest desire to do my best and utmost for the interests of

India and the service of the Crown, so I trust I should be sustained by the same motive if required to carry on the Government of India till the cool season is sufficiently advanced to enable my successor to relieve me of it without risking his life. But, in that case, my position will not only be a personally painful one: what is far more important is that it will, I fear, be powerless for good and injurious to the dignity and authority of the viceregal office. For I shall be working on sufferance under a ministry whose members have publicly proclaimed that I possess neither their confidence nor their esteem, and who have, indeed, omitted no opportunity of casting ridicule and discredit on my character and that of my administration. If, on the other hand, Her Majesty's new advisers are of opinion that the disadvantages would exceed the conveniences of such an arrangement, Sir John Strachey, as Senior Member of my Council, would take charge of the Government, pending the arrival at Calcutta of the Duke of Buckingham, by whom, as senior Presidency Governor, it must, by law, be conducted till transferred to the new Viceroy. This arrangement would, I believe, oblige all the members of the Government to return to Calcutta for the Duke's installation; and I think I should also take sail from Calcutta at the same time, so as to avoid the terrible journey to Bombay; but, as I could not bring Lady Lytton and my children across the plains of India in this deadly season, even as far as Calcutta, I shall be obliged to leave them somewhere at Simla till they can rejoin me in England next autumn. Enough of these personal matters.'

To Lord Cranbrook, April 20

Early in May Lord Lytton heard that he had

been recommended by Lord Beaconsfield for an Earldom.

*To the Earl of Beaconsfield*

[*Private*] 'Simla: May 4, 1880.

To Lord Beaconsfield, May 4

'My dear and honoured Chief,—You will not have doubted the sincerity of my thanks, and those of Lady Lytton, for your valued recommendation of the Earldom, which I specially value as a public mark of your sympathy and the Queen's approval now that I have fallen, not only upon evil times, but also upon evil tongues.

'In discharging the duties of the important office for which you selected me more than four years ago, it has been my constant endeavour to justify, and if possible requite, the great and courageous confidence which entrusted the duties of it to hands so untried as mine. In now resigning it, therefore, with every sentiment of personal gratitude and fidelity, allow me to assure you that the continuance of your confidence has been my chief sustainment and encouragement throughout four years of much mental anxiety and physical fatigue. I now long for rest and even obscurity. My conception of beatitude is *procul negotiis*. And even under conditions far more favourable than those to which I can look forward, I feel that I have already survived the age at which any man can, without previous training for it, commence a parliamentary career with reasonable prospects of success. Too old to court failure, I am still too inexperienced to escape it in any new field of public exertion. But although these are the feelings with which I contemplate my early return to England, I am, believe me, neither destitute of gratitude nor indifferent to its duties. And should

it ever be your opinion that I can, by word or deed, speech or pen, in or out of Parliament, render the smallest service to the great cause which history will identify with your name, to the chief who commands my unreserved allegiance, or to the party which has stood by me during the last four troubled years, need I assure you that I feel bound to you by every tie of personal gratitude, political sympathy, and public duty. It is at least in the fullest recognition of all these ties, that I remain, dear Lord Beaconsfield,

'Your affectionately devoted friend and servant,

'LYTTON.'

## CHAPTER IX

### NEGOTIATIONS WITH ABDUL RAHMAN. CHANGE OF ENGLISH MINISTRY. CONCLUSION

It has been seen that at the time of the change of ministry at home military operations in Afghanistan had practically been completed. The Government of India were determined that our troops should retire from Northern Afghanistan by the autumn of the year. The objects of the war had been achieved. The murder of the British Envoy had been avenged; the disintegration of the country had been secured by the severance of Western from Northern Afghanistan, and such a position had been gained by our troops as to render the Government of India independent henceforth of the good or ill will of the Amir of Kabul. Nothing, therefore, was to be gained by a continued military occupation of a country we had decided not to annex, and much might be lost thereby in lives and money. Lord Lytton, holding this view of the situation very strongly, urged that our withdrawal should be unconditional. That having chosen a date convenient to our troops for their evacuation of Kabul, their movements should not be hindered or precipitated by any arrangements which the people of Kabul were free to make with Abdul Rahman or any other Sirdar. It has already been shown that he strongly disapproved of such language being used by our officers in command at Kabul as could lead Abdul Rahman or any other chief to suppose that we

were willing to enter into treaty arrangements for the maintenance or support of any chief aspiring to the throne of Kabul. The policy of establishing friendly relations with the Amir, and supporting the integrity of his kingdom, on conditions of reciprocal goodwill had failed. We had now made ourselves independent of the alliance of any Amir, and although we desired, for the restoration of internal order, to leave the government in the hands of a capable ruler, it was otherwise a matter of indifference to us who was chosen, and we did not desire to interfere in the matter of his election. Abdul Rahman had appeared to Lord Lytton a hopeful candidate for the Amirship from the first moment he was known to have set foot in Afghan territory, but the Viceroy held most strongly that no negotiations with him should be entered into without the clearest definition of our position in the sense here stated.

Situation in Afghanistan at the time of the change of Government

This view was accepted by those in authority at Kabul with some difference of opinion. They were anxious not to evacuate the country without leaving it in the hands of some settled government, and with this object their communications with Abdul Rahman were so worded as to encourage that Sirdar to assume the position of one able and willing to bargain. His reply to Mr. Griffin's letter of April 30 was to the effect that his further progress towards Kabul would depend upon whether he could obtain satisfactory assurances on such questions as (1) the retention of Kandahar, (2) the presence of a British Agent in Afghanistan, and (3) the conditions we would exact with regard to his attitude towards Russia. Lord Lytton felt that the principles which should govern any reply to this letter were of vital importance and could hardly be

Abdul Rahman's reply to Mr. Griffin's letter of April 30

laid down by 'a moribund Government.' It was a matter which must be left for the consideration of the new Viceroy. Lord Lytton could do no more than place on record in a Minute to be put before Lord Ripon and his Council, so soon as he should reach India, the course which, in his opinion, it would be best to pursue. In this Minute he advised that General Stewart should receive very definite and precise instructions respecting not only his reply to Abdul Rahman, but also his own movements. General Stewart in answer to Lord Lytton's inquiries had wired from Kabul: 'The force under my command is so strong that it can withdraw at any moment without serious risk. . . . A precipitate withdrawal would be impolitic, but it would not be attended with any dangerous risk, whether a friendly ruler has or has not been found.' Lord Lytton therefore considered that the instructions to General Stewart should express the desire of the Government 'that the evacuation of Kabul should be commenced at the earliest possible date which in the opinion of the General commanding in the field may be compatible with his military and political appreciation of the situation, for which he is responsible; that it should be carried out, not with precipitation (which must be the case if it is deferred till the last moment fixed by the Government of India, some months ago, for the complete retirement of our forces from Northern Afghanistan), but in a leisurely deliberate manner, and that every care should be taken to avoid all appearance of mystery or uncertainty in regard to the intentions of Government on this important point. Furthermore, that the evacuation of Kabul should be effected by the gradual, but early, and, if possible, immediately commenced retirement

Lord Lytton's last Minute.

of the army of Northern Afghanistan on the two commanding positions of Gundamuk and the Kurum headlands. In the meanwhile the situation in Northern Afghanistan will have greatly developed; and during the intervening period our forces will hold military positions sufficiently commanding for their support of any political purpose which can possibly arise out of that situation.

'As regards the political instructions to General Stewart, I strongly disapprove of any *ultimatum* to Abdul Rahman, for an *ultimatum* implies terms and conditions; it is, in fact, the ordinary result of an abortive negotiation. But with Abdul Rahman we should carefully avoid all negotiation. I would instruct General Stewart to write briefly to the Sirdar in the following sense:

'(*a*) That the Sirdar has misunderstood the object of the mission sent to him.

'(*b*) That the Government of India does not desire to select or appoint any ruler for that portion of the Afghan provinces which it is about to unite.

'(*c*) That in regard to any such selection it is willing to recognise the choice of the people concerned.

'(*d*) That, though also willing to accept, and ready to reciprocate, the friendship of the ruler thus selected, it has been constrained to take steps for rendering the maintenance of its own interests practically independent of the friendship or hostility of any such ruler, experience having proved to it that no reliance can be placed upon treaty or other engagements with the Kabul Power; and all treaties concluded with the last legitimate

Lord Lytton's last Minute

and recognised rulers of Kabul having been dissolved by war.

'(*e*) That the measures which have thus been imposed on the Government of India, in defence of its own interests, are—the permanent maintenance of the frontier positions acquired by it under the Treaty of Gundamuk, and which, without seeking to renew that treaty, will certainly be retained as conquered territory; and also the permanent severance of the whole province of Kandahar from the Kabul Power.

'(*f*) That these territorial arrangements are irrevocable; that they have been made, and will be maintained, without regard to the assent or dissent of any Amir of Kabul; and that any attempt on the part of such a ruler to disturb them will involve him in open enmity with the British Government.

'(*g*) That the Government of India, having completed these arrangements, and beaten all its enemies in Northern Afghanistan, is about to evacuate the country.

'(*h*) That our object in communicating with the Sirdar was to give him timely information of these decisions, in order that he might, in his own interests, take such advantage of them as appeared to him desirable.

'(*i*) That we were induced to take that step, because he appeared to be one of the most capable and promising of the numerous candidates for the vacant throne.

'(*j*) But that the Government of India is not concerned to espouse or oppose the personal cause of such candidates, so long as their

Lord Lytton's last Minute

political or military action does not infringe its rights or threaten its interests; and that in no case can it sign treaties, or enter into alliances, with rulers who do not yet exist.

'(*k*) It has consequently no conditions to make with Abdul Rahman; no negotiations to open with him.

'(*l*) It retains in its own hands, permanently, the military means of promptly punishing any Kabul ruler who, whether under foreign or domestic influence, fails in any of those commonly recognised duties of good neighbourhood which every great Power is entitled to expect and demand from the Government of a contiguous State, and it seeks no other guarantee for the good behaviour of the future ruler of those provinces which, having secured that guarantee, it is about to evacuate.

'(*m*) If Abdul Rahman, who will meet with no opposition from us unless he provokes it, succeeds in procuring the position to which he aspires, it will be for him to shape his future conduct as Amir of Kabul, according to his appreciation of his own interests, under the conditions thus explained to him. If, in his endeavours to confirm that position he decides to rely upon Russian aid,—he will do so with a full knowledge of the dangers to which such a decision may expose him. If, on the other hand, he requires, and prefers to seek, our aid,—his application for it will be fairly considered in reference to the circumstances under which it is made.

'(*n*) He must understand, however, that, as we have nothing to ask from him, it is out of his power to dictate terms to us. We do not require his assistance. If he requires ours, he must ask for it, and prove to us that it will be worth our while to accede to his request. We do not offer it to him.

'(*o*) With regard to Herat, he should be told that we shall not oppose any endeavour on his part to take and keep it; and that, if his endeavour is successful, it will be recognised by us.

'I think it very desirable that measures for the evacuation of Kabul itself should be openly commenced simultaneously with the despatch of some such letter to Abdul Rahman.

'I would offer to, and provide for, Abdul Rahman the earliest possible opportunity of entering Kabul without finding in it any British troops. I would leave to him, on his entry there, a free field for a trial of strength between his own party and that of the partisans and representatives of the ex-Amir. I am convinced that without such a trial of strength, no solid Government can be established at Kabul; and that the British Government cannot advantageously interfere with this preliminary process of natural selection. I would scrupulously abstain from any action which could commit us even to the apparent espousal of either cause; leaving to the surviving victor in the conflict the apparently unavoidable necessity of suing to us for assistance or support, which we could then give on our own terms or conditions, to enable him to maintain his victory and consolidate the authority acquired by it. I would act, in short, consistently, and persistently, on

Lord Lytton's last Minute

the only principle which seems to me appropriate to the great strength, and solidity, of our position, if we do not fritter its strength and solidity away by a nervous, fussy, and futile diplomacy.

'I have not thought it necessary in this Minute to deal with any of the incidental questions connected with the duty of making adequate provision for the protection of any Sirdars or tribes whose relations with our authorities at Kabul during the occupation of that place may have been such as to establish a claim on our protection, which, when finally examined, is admitted by those authorities to be valid. Unless our representatives at Kabul have, in their confidential communications with such tribes or Sirdars, committed the Government to an extent of which we are not at present aware, it is *primâ facie* extremely improbable that there can be any large number of these claims that will stand impartial examination arising out of our temporary relations with the population of which almost every man has been either an open enemy or a secret traitor to our authority. Whatever claims of this kind may be hereafter fairly established by local investigation should be frankly recognised and substantially satisfied at any cost. But these are questions on which the Government of India can, I consider, express no opinion without further information and advice from General Stewart, to whom a final examination of all such claims may, I think, be safely entrusted.

'But, whatever happens, I sincerely trust that the Government of India will never be induced to assent to the restoration of Yakub Khan. The hands of that Prince are deeply stained in the innocent blood of Sir Louis Cavagnari and his brave companions. Subsequent secret correspondence and in-

formation has, in my opinion, fully confirmed the unanimous verdict of the Kabul Commission as to the deliberate guilt of Yakub Khan; and I would here remind my colleagues in the Government of India that, without reference to such further information, which the Foreign Secretary will be able to lay before my successor, the Advocate-General and the Chief Justice of the High Court at Calcutta have substantially endorsed the verdict of the Kabul Commission. . . . . But, if such a question is hereafter raised by the action of the Government of India, in restoring Yakub Khan to the throne of Kabul, or otherwise condoning his participation in the massacre of the British Embassy, I think it only due to my successor that I should here place on record my firm determination, as a personal friend of the murdered men, to omit no means or opportunities available to me of opposing and publicly condemning any such action.

'LYTTON.'

'SIMLA: *5th June*, 1880.'

Lord Ripon's arrival

Lord Lytton's departure from India

This Minute may be said to contain Lord Lytton's last words as Viceroy of India. They were written on June 5. On June 8 Lord Ripon arrived at Simla and received from Lord Lytton the charge of government. On June 28 Lord Lytton left Simla, and set sail for England from Bombay on July 3.

A few days after Lord Ripon's arrival at Simla he received news that letters had been intercepted from Abdul Rahman to the Afghan chiefs urging them to assemble their forces and make ready to join him in a united march upon Kabul.

These letters appeared to betray hostile intentions towards the British Government, and the advisability of at once breaking off negotiations with Abdul Rahman was considered.

Lord Ripon, however, and the Government of India considered that before such correspondence was finally closed it would be reasonable that the Sirdar should receive definite answers upon the points he had raised, to which he no doubt attached chief importance.

Abdul Rahman is answered in accordance with Lord Ripon's instructions, June 14

Accordingly, on June 14 the authorities of Kabul, acting upon instructions from the Indian Government, addressed a communication to Abdul Rahman in which these replies were clearly stated.

In the first place, with regard to the position of the ruler of Kabul to foreign powers, he was assured that 'the British Government admit no right of interference by foreign powers in Afghanistan,' that since both Russia and Persia were pledged to abstain from all political interference with the affairs of Afghanistan, it was plain the Kabul ruler could 'have no political relations with any foreign power except the English.' If any such foreign power attempted to interfere in Afghanistan 'and such interference should lead to unprovoked aggression on the Kabul ruler,' then the British Government would 'aid him if necessary to repel it,' provided that he followed their advice.

With regard to the limits of territory he was told that the province of Kandahar had been placed under a separate ruler, that Pishin and Sibi were retained in British possession, and the arrangements concluded with the ex-Amir Yakub Khan with regard to the North-Western Frontier held good. These matters did not admit of discussion, but with these reservations the British Government were willing that he should establish over Afghanistan and Herat, though his possession of Herat could not be guaranteed to

him, as complete and extensive authority as had been exercised by any Amir of his family.

Finally, he was assured that the British Government did not desire to interfere in the internal government of these territories, and would not require the admission of an English Resident anywhere in Afghanistan, although for 'convenience of ordinary friendly intercourse between two contiguous States it may be advisable to station by agreement a Mohammedan agent of the British Government at Kabul.'

'If you should,' the letter went on to say, 'after clearly understanding the wishes and intentions of the British Government, as stated in former letters, and now further explained, desire these matters to be stated in a formal writing, it is necessary that you should first intimate plainly your acceptance or refusal of the invitation of the British Government, and should state your proposals for carrying into effect friendly arrangements.'[1]

Abdul Rahman replies, June 26

The Sirdar's reply to this communication was received at Kabul on June 26. In it he expressed satisfaction at the terms of Mr. Griffin's letter, but made no direct allusion to the retention of Kandahar. In a circular which at the same time Abdul Rahman issued to the tribes he gave a misleading version of the nature of the communication he had received from the British Government. But his position was a difficult one. However really anxious to make peace with the English, he had also to impress the powerful and hostile tribes of Afghanistan with the conviction that he came with power to seize and retain authority as ruler at Kabul. His object, therefore, was to accept the best terms possible from the British Government,

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

and appear in the eyes of the Afghans to have dictated those terms.

Our Envoy to Abdul Rahman, while treated with outward respect and courtesy, was in fact kept a close prisoner in his camp, and never left his tent from the day he arrived to the day he left, except when summoned to formal interviews with the Sirdar.

After considering the terms of Abdul Rahman's letter, the report of the Envoy as to his general impressions of the Sirdar, and the tone of his circular to the tribesmen, the Government decided to communicate with him once more. Mr. Griffin was instructed to reply to his letter, directing his attention to the territorial reservations previously made, desiring him to move at once towards Kabul with a force not larger than necessary for his own protection, and calling upon him to prevent armed gatherings in Kohistan. In the event of Abdul Rahman failing to comply without delay, and satisfactorily with the requisitions addressed to him, General Stewart was instructed to break off all negotiations with him, and in that case to assemble the Sirdars and leaders of the party of Sher Ali's family and state openly that our correspondence with Abdul Rahman was closed; that we should withdraw from Kabul at our earliest convenience; that they must consult and establish a Government for themselves; that we were prepared to recognise any Government so established, and to transfer Kabul to it, and that if not molested in the positions we might provisionally take up, we intended to retire shortly within our own frontier. These instructions, it will be seen, were drawn up in general accordance with Lord Lytton's advice. They were approved by Lord Hartington, the new Secretary of State.

On July 10 Abdul Rahman replied that he would speedily arrive in Kohistan, but could not proceed to Kabul till he had consulted the people of Afghanistan. He evaded the demand that he should disperse the armed gatherings of the tribes. On July 14 he arrived at Kohistan and there received a native deputation from Kabul. From this time the situation improved. On July 17 he wrote in a much more friendly spirit intimating that in five days he would proceed to Kabul, members of the Ghuzni and Ghilzai party having now joined him.

On July 19 the British authorities at Kabul sent to inform Abdul Rahman that a durbar would be held on July 22 for the purpose of recognising him formally and publicly before the Sirdars and people of Kabul and the neighbouring country as their future Amir. On July 20 he replied in a friendly letter dated from Charikar, expressing his intention of sending a deputation to attend the durbar.

Durbar held to proclaim Abdul Rahman Amir of Kabul

This deputation arrived on July 22 and the durbar was held in the afternoon of the same day.

It was attended by all the principal chiefs and residents of Kabul and its neighbourhood. Most of the officers of the garrison at Kabul were also present.

After a short opening address by Sir Donald Stewart, the wishes and intentions of Government were explained by Mr. Griffin in a Persian speech, and Sirdar Abdul Rahman was formally acknowledged and recognised by the British Government as 'Amir of Kabul.'

A few days later a meeting took place at Zimma, about sixteen miles north of Kabul, between Mr. Lepel Griffin and the Sirdar himself. At this interview the questions of assistance in money and arms, the conclusion of a treaty, and the Amir's position in respect to Herat and Kandahar were discussed. With

regard to the first question the Amir was informed that the money found in the Treasury (9,65,731 rupees) when the British army arrived at Kabul would be handed to him; that he would be given, in addition, ten lacs of rupees; and that the Afghan guns remaining in Sherpur and in the Bala Hissar would be left for his use. These conditions by no means satisfied the Amir.

With regard to the second point, he was informed that no treaty could be granted him with the British Government till he had established and consolidated his own Government, but that after a reasonable delay it would no doubt be possible to negotiate a treaty with him.

With regard to the territorial question, he expressed comparative indifference provided he was not held responsible for what happened in territories not under his control.

Mr. Lepel Griffin to Government of India, Aug. 4

Mr. Lepel Griffin wrote of the Amir after this interview: 'Amir Abdul Rahman Khan is a man of about forty, of middle height and rather stout. He has an exceedingly intelligent face, brown eyes, a pleasant smile, and a frank courteous manner. The impression that he left on me and the officers who were present at the interview was most favourable. He is by far the most prepossessing of all the Barakzai Sirdars whom I have met in Afghanistan, and in conversation showed both good sense and sound political judgment. He kept thoroughly to the point under discussion, and his remarks were characterised by shrewdness and ability. He appeared animated by a sincere desire to be on cordial terms with the English Government, and although his expectations were, as might have been anticipated, larger than Government is prepared to

Aug. 4, 1880
To Government of India

satisfy, yet he did not press them with any discourteous insistence, and the result of the interviews may be considered on the whole to be highly satisfactory.'[1]

The scene shifts again from Kabul to Kandahar. Four days after the proclamation of the new Amir an event happened which led to the reopening of the question of the severance of the Western from the Northern Provinces of Afghanistan, and finally to the reversal of this part of Lord Lytton's policy.

The circumstances which led up to the defeat of the British troops by Ayub Khan of Herat at Maiwand need not here be detailed, and the following short summary by Sir Alfred Lyall of the disaster and consequent relief of Kandahar will suffice.

'Ayub Khan, Sher Ali's younger son, who had been holding Herat during our operations at Kabul and Kandahar, set out towards Kandahar with a small army in June 1880, and a brigade under General Burrows was detached from Kandahar to oppose him. Neither upon the manœuvres of this brigade, nor upon the tactical disposition of our troops when they met the enemy, does Lord Roberts trust himself to make any observation; he confines himself to a bare statement of the facts that the Afghans outflanked the British, that our artillery soon expended their ammunition, that the native troops got out of hand and pressed back upon the few European infantry, that "our troops were completely routed, and had to thank the apathy of the Afghans in not following them up for escaping total annihilation." No such indisputable victory over British forces in the open field had been gained by an Asiatic leader in all our long Indian wars; and for that very reason the study of this short but most instructive

[1] *Narrative of Events in Afghanistan.*

campaign may be commended to all Anglo-Indian soldiers, since it serves as a lighthouse to illustrate the ways leading straight to destruction.

Roberts's march to Kandahar

'The relief of Kandahar, which was now invested by Ayub Khan's army, became a matter of urgent necessity. With the consent of Sir Donald Stewart, Roberts telegraphed at once to Simla a proposal that he should lead a relieving force straight from Kabul; and the Viceroy (Lord Ripon) agreed promptly. Ten thousand picked men, inured to Afghan warfare by their Kabul experiences, armed and equipped up to the highest degree of efficiency, with their tents and baggage reduced to the lowest possible scale, and transported entirely upon beasts of burden, without even wheeled artillery, could probably have marched, like Xenophon's 10,000 Greeks, across half Asia and over any enemy in their path. Their chief anxiety was in regard to the scarcity of supplies upon certain sections of their route; and their main concern on the march was about stragglers, for the long rapid marches wearied out the camp followers, not one of whom could lag or stray without being killed by the Afghans. Here, again, is another example of methods and resource in difficulties, to be studied this time as a model by those who may be hoping that England has not yet closed her long annals of Asiatic adventure. Between August 11 and 31 the force traversed the 313 miles that separate Kabul from Kandahar, where Roberts, prostrate with fever, halted under the city walls. The place was impregnable, except by scaling-ladders, for Ayub Khan had no siege train, yet the spirits of the garrison seemed to Roberts somewhat below the standard of moral elevation that inspires heroic resistance; and undoubtedly he was made welcome in all sincerity. A strong reconnais-

sance drew the Afghan fire, disclosed their position, and Roberts made his arrangements to attack it by a turning movement on the next morning.

'For an excellent and well-handled force of nearly 15,000 men (including the Kandahar garrison), with thirty-six guns, the business of taking in flank the ridge upon which Ayub Khan had entrenched himself against a front attack was no hard matter. After some very creditable fighting on both sides Ayub Khan was duly routed, and his army followed the example of their chief by a speedy flight, leaving a large standing camp entirely deserted, with the whole of the Afghan artillery. The British cavalry made a vain and somewhat inglorious pursuit; but the work had been done thoroughly in masterly style, and Roberts, who had led his men to this brilliant termination of their labours, had good excuse for recording that never had a commander been better served.' [1]

The withdrawal of General Roberts's force from Kabul made the speedy evacuation of Kabul by the remaining troops a matter of imperative necessity.

General Stewart's withdrawal from Kabul

Independently of this, however, all the objects which had hitherto detained them there were accomplished, their supplies, which had been admirably calculated almost to a day, were now nearly exhausted, and it was possible and natural to withdraw from Kabul on the day which had been fixed for that purpose two months ago. On political and sanitary grounds it was decided to make no halt at Gundamuk, but to retire at once within the limits of our new frontier. This feat was accomplished under General Stewart with masterly skill, and by September 7 he had marched his troops out of Afghanistan without

[1] Sir Alfred Lyall.

firing a single shot. Adequate garrisons were left at Lundi Kotal and Ali Musjid.

The future of Kandahar, now occupied by General Roberts after his successful march and defeat of Ayub Khan, had next to be considered. The openly avowed desire of the Home Government of 1880 was to reverse as completely as possible the policy of the Government which preceded them, and which they had openly denounced and condemned. The failure of Sher Ali Khan to keep his hold over Kandahar without military assistance from us gave them the looked for opportunity of casting aside the solemn pledges which had been made in the name of the British Government to him and to his heirs, of persuading him to resign and retire to India, and of handing over to the Amir of Kabul once more these provinces of a different race, who had hitherto detested the oppressive yoke which Kabul rule placed upon their necks.

The question of the evacuation of Kandahar was mooted four days after our defeat at Maiwand, and by the end of November the Secretary of State announced in a dispatch the final decision of the Home Government to withdraw from this post. By the end of that month Sher Ali Khan publicly announced his resignation and its acceptance by the British Government. He left Kandahar in December and retired to Karachi, where he lives to this day. At the same time Amir Abdul Rahman was invited to take possession of the provinces of Kandahar thus left without a Government.

It was announced in the Queen's Speech on the reassembling of Parliament, January 1881, that Her Majesty had been advised to abandon the possession of Kandahar. In the Debate on the Address which followed this announcement Lord Lytton rose, for the

first time in the House of Lords, to oppose this policy and to make a personal statement with reference to his own action as Viceroy of India in regard to the late Afghan war. In this speech he said :—

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'I do not know, and the House does not know, what are the reasons which have induced the present Government to come to the decision that Kandahar ought to be abandoned, and to advise Her Majesty to this effect; but I do say that such a decision ought not to be carried out without a fair, an impartial, and, if necessary, a repeated reference to the reasons which induced the late Government to come to the precisely opposite conclusion that Kandahar ought to be retained, and to advise Her Majesty to that effect. My Lords, these reasons were numerous, they were serious, and they were carefully considered. But, for the present, they may all be summed up in the conviction, to which the late Government was led by them, upon a full review of the whole condition of those affairs with which you are now dealing in Afghanistan—that the permanent maintenance of the British Power at Kabul—I do not say necessarily by means of annexation, though neither do I shrink from saying by means of annexation should that become necessary; but, at any rate, in some form or other, direct or indirect, which, for all practical purposes, will be a substantial reality—is now the only effectual safeguard against a recurrence, and possibly a constant recurrence, of the dangers so conspicuously brought into light, and so forcibly pressed on our attention, by our experience of the late Afghan War, and our knowledge of the circumstances which gave rise to it. Whatever may have been the merits or demerits of that war, it has conclusively established, beyond all possibility of reasonable or honest ques-

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tion, one fact of supreme importance. That fact is the facility with which Russia—if she has established her influence in Afghanistan, or if she can establish her influence there—will always be able, whenever she desires, to cripple the action or embarrass the policy of England in Europe, by disturbing the security of England in India. And to do this, moreover, without even employing her own troops for the purpose, but simply by creating a diversion on the North-West Frontier of India, through an alliance with the Kabul Power. This, I say, is the one great fact you have now to deal with, and which, whatever be your policy, you must always bear in mind. It is established on evidence of the most formidable character. It cannot be disputed, and it ought not to be shirked. My Lords, the Russian Mission to Kabul, which was the immediate occasion of the Afghan War, is a proceeding of which the morality has been justified on the ground that it was virtually a war measure legitimised by the fact that our European relations with Russia were, at that time, strained to the very verge of imminent hostilities. But we are not concerned to discuss the morality of that proceeding. What does practically concern us is the danger of it. And from this point of view it matters nothing to us whether the mission was the result of sudden impulse or long premeditation. If it was the result of sudden impulse, it clearly shows us how close is the peril to which we shall at all times be exposed from the establishment in Afghanistan of any foreign influence more powerful, or more energetically exerted, than our own. If, on the other hand, it was the result of careful preparation, it shows us, no less clearly, how great is the value attached by Russia to the acquisition of such an influence, and what is the purpose to

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which she will put it if she acquires it. In the one case, you must look upon Afghanistan as a loaded pistol lying on your doorstep, ready to be exploded in the full front of your power whenever Russia, upon a sudden impulse, stretches out a hasty hand to seize it. In the other case, you are fully warned of the mischief which such a weapon may inflict on you, if you ever relax your own firm grasp upon the butt end of it. In both cases the danger is the same; and in either case the magnitude of such a danger can scarcely be exaggerated. And in connection with this consideration there is another, which must always be taken into account. I do not suppose there exists in Europe a man whose mind is loaded with weightier or more constant cares, arising out of wider interests, than the Sovereign who personally administers the vast Empire of Russia. It is practically impossible for the Russian Government at St. Petersburg to be incessantly watching and controlling the detailed action of its local authorities in a region so remote as Central Asia. The Russian Governor-General at Tashkend thus occupies, in his great Satrapy as the Representative of a distant and despotic Government, a position of great practical independence; and, if he be an able, energetic, and ambitious man, anxious to extend the influence, or the territory, of his Sovereign, he will naturally do a great many things which he has not been instructed to do—at the risk of being disapproved if he fails, but in the hope of winning honour and reward if he succeeds. This consideration leads me to the point of what I have to say about the object and origin of that Russian Mission. It was not an unpremeditated mission. It was not an impromptu act of retaliation or precaution. But it was the carefully prepared result of three years'

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preliminary correspondence, and three years' direct negotiation—in all, six years of patient preparation. I affirm this briefly, but positively. It would take me all night to prove in detail what I affirm; but the proofs of it are to be found by those who care to search for them, obscurely buried and inconveniently dispersed through numerous Blue Books, all of which are accessible to your Lordships. And, in one word, this is what they prove. From the year 1872 to the year 1875 the Governor-General of Russian Turkestan was in constant communication with the Amir of Kabul; and his communications were regarded—I must say most reasonably regarded—by the Amir and his advisers as having no other conceivable object than that of establishing Russian influence in Afghanistan. The Amir was at first seriously alarmed, and afterwards dangerously attracted, by the increasing significance of these communications; and, in the year 1873, he made to the British Government a strong appeal on the subject of them. With the result of that appeal he was, as your Lordships well know, dissatisfied. . . .

'I have thus briefly indicated the position of the Kabul Power, between the now no longer distant bounds of the Russian and British Empires in Asia. Thus situated, no Amir of Kabul can practically stand alone and aloof from the influence of one or other of the two great European Empires with which Afghanistan is contiguous. He must inevitably fall under the control either of the British or of the Russian Power; and, if he does not fall under British control, it is obvious that he will fall under Russian control. To deny this appears to me as extravagant a proposition as it would be to assert that a stick, balanced on its end and left to

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itself, will not fall in one direction or another. And now, let us suppose for a moment that Afghanistan falls under the control of Russia. Can any one of your Lordships doubt for a moment that the establishment of Russian influence in Afghanistan would be practically incompatible with the untroubled maintenance of the British Power in India? My Lords, it does not lie in the mouth of any responsible statesman to maintain such an opinion. And, certainly, no such opinion was entertained by the late Lord Lawrence, whose authority on this subject was so frequently invoked in your discussions of two years ago. Ten years previous to the event of which I am now speaking, the only danger beyond our North-West Frontier anticipated by Lord Lawrence, or by anyone else, was from the establishment of Russian influence in Afghanistan by forcible means. Lord Lawrence could not then discuss, for no one then foresaw, the danger which actually did arise ten years later from the public presence of the Russian Power at Kabul—not as the foe, but as the avowed friend and ally of the Amir of Kabul, at a time when that prince had ceased to be the avowed friend and ally of the British Government. Yet even then, in a valuable Minute dated 1868, Lord Lawrence recorded his opinion that it is so necessary to exclude Russian influence from Afghanistan—ay, and to exclude it at any cost—that Russia, he said, ought to be plainly told that any further advance upon her part beyond a given point towards India—and, my Lords, her Asiatic frontiers were then far less close to ours than they are now—would entail upon her war with England in all parts of the world. War in all parts of the world! Such was the importance attached by Lord Lawrence to the efficacious and permanent exclusion

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of Russian influence from Afghanistan; and I think the leading members of the present Cabinet are all equally committed to this principle. . . . If, then, all responsible British statesmen and all practical Indian administrators are agreed as to the importance of maintaining British, and excluding Russian, influence in Afghanistan, it surely follows that the only practical question we have to consider is how is this to be done? Now, there are two ways in which you may endeavour to effect this object. You may seek the attainment of it by the exercise of a recognised control over the foreign relations of the Kabul Ruler by means of competent British Representatives or Agents in his dominions. This was the plan first tried by the late Government of India, and which led to the Treaty of Gundamuk. So long as that plan was possible, we were anxious not to weaken, but to strengthen the Kabul Power; and in its despatch of July 1879, the late Government of India, reviewing the terms and objects of that Treaty, recorded its opinion that, so long as the Treaty was loyally observed by the Amir of Kabul, the annexation of Kandahar would not only be unnecessary, but also undesirable. The case, however, was essentially altered by the atrocious massacre of our Mission at Kabul, which defeated the main object of the Treaty of Gundamuk. And, my Lords, I do not deny for a moment that this is an event which I recall, and shall always recall, with the keenest affliction. I do not think that even his nearest relations can mourn with a deeper grief than mine the dastardly murder of my dear and truly gallant friend, Sir Louis Cavagnari. I will not obtrude upon this House my great private sorrow for that irreparable loss. Apart, however, from that great sorrow, my opinion as to

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the propriety of the course we pursued by acquiescing in the Amir's strongly expressed, and apparently sincere, request for the support of a British Mission at his Court, is an opinion entirely unchanged by the abominable crime with which it was so ill requited. But, although, I think it was right, and even necessary, in the interests of all concerned, to make that humane experiment, undeterred by the risks it involved, and of which we were not unconscious, I admit, my Lords, that the experiment has failed. That being the case, the failure of it leaves open only one course practically conducive to the attainment of those objects which all responsible statesmen have hitherto approved, desired, and insisted on; and this is the course adopted by the late Government in reference to Kandahar. For if you cannot have moral guarantees for the adequate control of the Kabul Power, then you must have material guarantees. The failure of the Gundamuk Treaty has proved the impossibility of moral guarantees; and what will be your material guarantees if you abandon Kandahar and the Kurum headlands? As long as you retain possession of these, the position we have to assert, and the interest we have to safeguard, upon our Afghan Frontier will be practically independent of the good or ill will of any Kabul Ruler. My Lords, the possession of Kandahar and the surrounding country, when brought into railway connection with the Valley of the Indus, will give us in Afghanistan the only kind of influence which is now possible for us to exercise over the people of that country. It will enable us to compel them, when necessary, to keep the peace; and it will render comparatively unimportant to us the condition of their relations with Russia. The possession of Kandahar would lay

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open the whole of Afghanistan to our armies in case of need. It would most effectually secure the Empire's only vulnerable frontier against both attack and intrigue; and it would open the means of bringing by rail all the trade of Central Asia to Karachi on the one hand and Calcutta on the other. I beseech Her Majesty's Ministers—most earnestly I beseech them—not to neglect the warning given them by General Roberts, or the example set them by Russia, in reference to the importance of cultivating their trade routes between India and Central Asia. It is not to war, but to commerce, that you must look for the extension of your legitimate influence in Asia. And, my Lords, pray remember that the loss of legitimate influence really means the loss of peace, the loss of security, the loss of freedom, the loss of all that renders possible the existence of the Indian Empire. And then there is another point which must not be lost sight of. The question of Kandahar does not stand alone. Beyond Kandahar there is Herat, beyond Herat there is Merv. My Lords, Herat is a position which England has twice fought to preserve from foreign domination. It has been called the key of India; and Liberal statesmen have at all times attached great importance to it. My own opinion is that the importance of Herat is entirely relative; and that if the British power were firmly established at Kandahar, you could afford to regard with indifference what happens at Herat. For you would then be in a position both to prevent any arrangements about Herat of which you did not approve, and also to enforce the observance of arrangements of which you did approve. But do not flatter yourselves that this is now your position. You are at present utterly powerless to exercise the

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smallest influence over the destinies of Herat, and so you will continue to be till you are firmly established at Kandahar. And now let us see what are the objections to this policy. The most practical of them all lies in the assumption that the annexation of Kandahar will be expensive. My Lords, this is a very debatable proposition. I do not think it can be denied or affirmed with any degree of certainty; for the rude phenomena of Afghan rule furnish no data from which to estimate correctly the probable financial results of British Administration. I do not think that any Indian Administrator could have possibly predicted before the annexation of the Punjab, whether that great addition to Empire would most increase the expenses or the revenues of the Indian Government. Much must necessarily depend upon the manner in which the province is administered; much also on the selection of the man to whom the administration of it is first entrusted. The opinion I was led to form, as Viceroy of India, upon the best information which could then be obtained, is that Kandahar, if judiciously administered, will, when connected by rail with the Valley of the Indus, at once pay its expenses; and that, in a short while, it will pay them twice over, and much more than twice over. I should think less highly than I do of the administrative capacity of our Indian Services if it turned out otherwise; but I admit that this is only a personal anticipation—a guess, if you will. Let us assume it to be over sanguine—what then? My Lords, national security, and that permanent immunity from external danger which is the essential condition of national security; these are blessings not to be enjoyed without paying the full price for them. The possession of Empire must

always be an expensive privilege. But the loss of Empire may be a ruinous disgrace; and the safety of India is worth more than a few pieces of silver. We cannot haggle with destiny. I feel not a shadow of a doubt that any re-settlement of the North-West Frontier of India which leaves that frontier exposed to a recurrence of the dangers that gave rise to the Afghan war will inflict, and at no distant date, upon the Government of India far heavier financial burdens than any which can be incurred on account of the administration of Kandahar. . . .

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'I come to what may be called the moral objections. We are told that annexation is very immoral; and that we have no right to annex Kandahar unless the Kandaharis specially request us to be so good as to do so, or unless, on the other hand, they commit some abominable crime, for which their conquest is the only fitting punishment. This objection was mentioned by the noble Marquess who is now Secretary of State for India (the Marquess of Hartington), in reply to a deputation urging him not to relinquish Kandahar. But the noble Marquess is a statesman whose mind is not swayed by impulsive sentiment; and I earnestly hope that the noble Marquess will not allow his calm and manly judgment to be confused by a mere word. What is conquest? It has many different meanings. It may mean such an operation as the conquests of Attila—massacre, confiscation, the sack of cities, the sale of their inhabitants into slavery; and this is probably the greatest of all evils. It may mean such an operation as the conquests of some Mohammedan Princes; the imposition of a grinding tribute, the degradation of the national religion, the violation of national traditions, and the outrage of national

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sentiment. This also is a great calamity for the conquered. But when it means only that good government is to be substituted for anarchy, that security for life and property is to supersede robbery and murder, and that a few English officials, with a limited number of English troops, who all pay liberally for everything they get, are to replace lawless Sirdars, who, owning a doubtful allegiance to a distant and alien despot, are in the habit of taking whatever they want without paying for it at all—then, my Lords, I really cannot see that conquest is a terrible thing, although you may please to give it a terrible name. The British Power, if established in Kandahar, would interfere with no man's religion. It would bring much money into the country, and so far from augmenting, it would greatly diminish the burden of taxation by increasing the wealth of the population. Under British rule the Kandaharis would quickly learn, as others have learnt before them, that law and order mean wealth; and there are no people in the world so greedy of wealth as the Afghans. As to national sentiments and traditions, British rule would not disturb them, for the simple reason that they do not exist. To suppose that the Kandaharis have any sort of loyalty to Kabul or any liking for the rule of a Kabul Amir, is to evince complete ignorance of their history and way of life. If ever there was a merely geographical entity, it is Afghanistan. It is as idle to talk of the national sentiments of the Afghans as it would be to talk of the corporate feeling of the parish of Marylebone, or to suppose that because Westminster and Athens are both of them cities, therefore the city of Westminster is regarded by its inhabitants with feelings like those with which Athens inspired the Athenians. My

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Lords, if any man was competent to judge of the normal natural condition of Afghanistan, that man was surely Lord Lawrence. Well, this is what Lord Lawrence wrote of it in 1868 :—

'"It appears to me that it will always be found exceedingly difficult, for any extended period, to maintain a united and strong government in Afghanistan. The genius of the chiefs and people, as evinced in the independent Pathan communities of the Border, is evidence to this effect. A chief may now and then arise who may for a time unite the different provinces under one rule; but when he has passed away, the tendency again will be to separation. With the single exception of the pressure of a common enemy, and even this circumstance will not always avail, there appear to be no ties to bind the Afghans together."

'My Lords, I do not believe that the people of Kandahar would regard themselves as humiliated in the smallest degree by annexation to British India. I am confident that such annexation would be of immense and permanent benefit to them; and I am disposed to doubt rather whether they deserve such a favour than whether they have merited such a punishment. Of any policy, however, which involves annexation, it may justly be asked, What is to be the practical limit of it? How far will you go with such a policy? How far can you go? "Are we," it may be said, "to go on conquering and annexing one barbarous wilderness after another, till we reach, at last, the Dardanelles in one direction and the boundaries of Russian Turkestan in another?" If not, where will you stop? Where will you draw the line? My Lords, I think it is very right to ask, and very necessary to answer, these questions. I do

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not underrate, and to a great extent I share, the sentiment with which, by so many of our countrymen, war and conquest are regarded in the light of public crimes. I will yield to no man in the condemnation of wars undertaken for no better object than the gratification of personal ambition, the indulgence of national vanity, or the provision of active service for an army. But I must observe that no one can denounce war and conquest in the absolute unmeasured terms so frequently employed for that purpose without denouncing, at the same time, one of the most potent agents of civilisation. The greater part of Europe consists of the fragments of the Roman Empire, an Empire created by wars which rendered possible the diffusion of Christianity and the development of law. The whole of America, North and South, has been conquered from its original owners, who were savages, chiefly by Englishmen and Spaniards. The enormous Russian Empire has been formed by a series of obscure wars waged against barbarians impenetrable to any other civilising process; and the whole fabric of the British Empire in India is an additional illustration of the same thing. Upon those, therefore, who have condemned my Afghan policy, solely on the ground that, in one form or another, it involves conquest, I am entitled, I think, to retort their own questions. Where, I ask, do they draw the line? Can they justify our present possession of the Peshawur Valley? Have we any right to Lahore? What is our title to Delhi, to Allahabad, to Benares, to Calcutta? My Lords, I believe that the most consistent and candid of my critics would answer all these questions plainly and directly enough. They would say, and indeed some of them have said, we have no business in India

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at all. It was by crime that we acquired our power in India. The only justification for its maintenance is that its downfall would be injurious to the natives; and the only attitude that befits us in that country is one of penitence for the sins of our forefathers, with an anxious desire to expiate, if possible, their fault. But, surely, the first remark suggested by this view of the case is, that those who hold it are, for that very reason, disqualified to form a trustworthy opinion on the policy best calculated to maintain and uphold the Empire of British India. No one should try to administer an institution of which he entirely disapproves. The man who does not value life and health ought not to practise as a physician; and a man who condemns the Indian Empire in principle is disqualified to judge of the measures necessary for its defence and security. I shall not attempt to refute these views; but I cannot pass them by without a few words of energetic contradiction. Whatever may be said by those who maintain them, I cannot believe, and I do not think the English nation will believe, that an Empire can have been founded on robbery and fraud; when we are also told in the same breath by those who make this assertion that the Empire thus founded must, nevertheless, be maintained, because its fall would involve 200,000,000 people in anarchy and bloodshed and relegate them to the barbarism from which they are slowly emerging. Grapes do not grow on thorns, nor figs on thistles; and it is surely not under the protection of thieves and robbers that men sit beneath their own vines and fig-trees in undisturbed enjoyment of the peaceful fruits of honest labour.

'My Lords, if I seem to have been asserting truisms I am sorry for it; but it seems to me that

the alleged moral obligation to retire from Kandahar cannot be stated in any terms which do not imply the proposition that we ought to retire from India altogether. And, therefore, to the question, "How far would you go, and where would you draw the line?" I reply without hesitation, that, for the present, I would go as far as Kandahar, and there I would draw the line. Because I am convinced that if the line be promptly drawn there, and, when drawn, firmly maintained, then you may look upon the permanent security of the North-West Frontier of India as a question practically closed—I will not say for ever, but closed at least for a period of time so long that the present generation need no longer be practically concerned about it.'

## Conclusion

It may here be stated, in order to complete the story of the Afghan war, that Ayub Khan, after his defeat at Kandahar, made his way back with a few horsemen to Herat, where he vigorously restored his power, put down his enemies, and recruited his forces. As soon as he heard that the English had evacuated Kandahar, he marched down again to take possession of it; and one of his generals, after defeating Abdul Rahman's troops on the way, re-occupied the city in July 1881. The situation was now full of anxiety for the Government of India, for Abdul Rahman was leading an army from Kabul against Ayub at Kandahar, and if the fortune of a battle should turn against him it was evident that all Afghanistan would again be thrown into confusion, and that the policy of establishing in the country a strong and friendly ruler would be very seriously

compromised. As Abdul Rahman had not up to this time shown any remarkable energy or military capacity, the general opinion was that he would be beaten. Nevertheless, after some indecisive manœuvres, he met Ayub's force close to Kandahar on September 22, where he gained a complete victory, taking all the enemy's guns and camp equipage; and when Ayub fled back to Herat he found the town seized by the Amir's adherents, so that he was forced to take refuge in Persia.

From that time Abdul Rahman's rulership over Afghanistan has been undisputed except by one or two insurrections, which were speedily quelled, and by the resistance of some of the highland tribes who fought to maintain their independence of the central government. Aided by a constant supply from India of money and arms, he has succeeded in establishing a powerful sovereignty, and he has enforced order by a fierce and relentless use of his despotic authority. His relations with the Government of India have been occasionally troubled by the difficulty of dealing with the independent tribes who occupy the belt of mountainous country lying between Afghanistan proper and the frontier of British India. And the approach of the Russian dominion to his northern frontier raised similar difficulties in that quarter. For the purpose of settling the tribal question, Mr. (now Sir Henry) Durand was deputed to Kabul in 1894, where a convention was concluded for the demarcation of the Afghan boundary on the east. A few years earlier the Russian boundary had been marked out, by agreement with Russia, on the north-west; and it has since been completely settled up to the Chinese Frontier. The policy of building up Afghanistan

into a strong independent kingdom has thus been consummated; so completely, indeed, that it is becoming perceptible that this policy, like all others, may have its drawbacks and possibly disadvantages. The old system of non-interference with Afghan affairs had at least this effect, that it kept the country weak and disunited; if Afghanistan was of little use as an ally, its hostility could never be formidable, while the mountains and the fighting tribes would always, for the sake of their own liberties, resist any foreign invader. But the intrigues of Russia with the Amir Sher Ali rendered this policy impracticable, and the second Afghan war was the result. Then came Lord Lytton's second plan of breaking up the kingdom by the separation of Kandahar under a ruler protected by the British, with the object of relieving the British Government from any dependence upon the good-will or ill-will of future Amirs at Kabul. Strong reasons may be adduced for holding that this policy might have succeeded in spite of evident risks and difficulties; but the course of events, and the change of views in England, frustrated any trial of it. How far, on the other hand, the consolidation of Afghanistan as an armed power, under an able ruler governing a fanatical people, will have operated for the peace and security of British India, and as a trustworthy barrier against external aggression, has yet to be seen. For the present therefore impartial observers can only conclude that after many vicissitudes of policy, and a large expenditure of men and money by the Indian Government, the problem of our permanent relations with Afghanistan is still awaiting a durable and satisfactory solution.

# CHAPTER X

## INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION. FINANCE

It has been thought advisable not to interrupt the account of events in Afghanistan by any other matter dealt with during Lord Lytton's administration. The questions of internal administration are therefore reserved for this and the following chapters, which relate to Finance, to the question of the inclusion of Natives in the Indian Civil Service, and to the passing of an Act for repressing seditious writings published in the vernacular.

The measures carried out by Lord Lytton's Government for the improvement of the Finances and the financial system of India have had a great and lasting influence on the prosperity of the country. In this department Lord Lytton had the good fortune of 'seeing what he foresaw,' of carrying out during his tenure of office all, or almost all, the reforms at which he aimed from the beginning of his Viceroyalty. In a letter to Lord Salisbury of September 24, 1876, he thus summed up the four chief heads of his financial policy:

Letter to Lord Salisbury, Sept. 24, 1876

'1. Equalisation of salt duties throughout India with a view to their early reduction, and abolition of the sugar duty.

Financial Programme

'2. Extension of the system of provincial assignments, and its application to sources of income.

'3. Immediate and final abandonment of the

Letter to Lord Salisbury, Sept. 24, 1876

Financial Programme

present system of constructing extraordinary public works out of capital annually borrowed in England, and transfer from Imperial to provincial resources of the responsibility of carrying out works of acknowledged local utility.

'4. Abolition of the import duty on coarse cottons, with a distinct declaration that the duty on the finer cottons is to go also as soon as ever the condition of the finances will permit; and enunciation of the policy of endeavouring to make India one great free port, open to the commerce of the whole world.'

It was not, indeed, given to him to carry out these great projects in a single year; but before he left India all his aims had been achieved, together with the measures needed to place the finances of the country in a secure position against the periodical recurrence of famine. The success of the financial policy he had in view would, Lord Lytton knew, depend upon his securing a first-rate Finance Minister to the Indian Government. That post, when he first arrived in India, was occupied by Sir William Muir, who resigned in the course of that year to accept a vacancy offered him on the India Council at home. Lord Lytton felt that, of all men in India, the one most qualified for such a post was Sir John Strachey, then Governor-General of the North-West Provinces. The post of Financial Member of Council was offered to him, and it was to Lord Lytton a source of never-ending gratitude that Sir John, 'under a high sense of personal obligation to public duty, consented to exchange a very comfortable and easy post for a very anxious and laborious one.' To the discharge of its difficult duties during a difficult period it was

the Viceroy's opinion that 'few men could have brought greater courage and capacity.'

Lord Lytton's tribute to Sir John Strachey at Manchester, 1882

Speaking at Manchester in the year 1882 on the subject of Indian Finance Lord Lytton referred to Sir John Strachey in the following terms:—'I cannot mention the name of that truly great Indian Statesman without expressing my admiration of his genius as well as my lasting gratitude for his generous and courageous assistance in the government of India during a very critical and difficult period. Long distinguished in almost every branch of Indian administration, Sir John Strachey has now closed a career of laborious and far-reaching public usefulness by a remarkable series of financial measures with which his name will be permanently associated in the annals of Indian history as one of the most sagacious and beneficent financiers that India has ever had.'

## Salt Duties

The conditions under which salt was produced and taxed in India at the commencement of Lord Lytton's Viceroyalty are thus described by Sir John Strachey, in his speech of March 15, 1877, introducing the Budget of 1877–8:

Strachey's Budget Speech, March 15, 1877

'The circumstances under which the salt duties are levied vary greatly in different parts of India. Bengal and Assam, with sixty-seven millions of people, get nearly the whole of their supply from Cheshire. . . . Almost the only local source within easy reach from which Bengal can obtain salt is the sea; and the natural facilities for making salt on the northern coasts of the Bay of Bengal are not great. The climate is so damp that salt cannot easily be obtained by the cheap process of solar evaporation;

Salt Duties

Strachey's Budget Speech, March 15, 1877

and, owing to the vast quantities of fresh water poured in by the Ganges and Brahmaputra, the sea is less salt than on the other shores of India. In Madras and Bombay, on the other hand, containing together about forty-seven millions of people, the manufacture of salt from the sea is cheap and easy, and for these Presidencies, as well as for the greater part of the Central Presidency and the Native States of Southern India, the sea is the great source of supply.

'Coming to Northern India, we find that the Punjab possesses inexhaustible supplies of rock salt, which is consumed by about fourteen millions of people. Throughout the North-West Provinces and Oudh, and a portion of the Central Presidency and of the Punjab, on the other hand, although there are many places where more or less impure salts can be produced, the home sources for the supply of good salt can never be sufficient. Forty-seven millions of our own subjects depend almost entirely for their salt on the Native States of Rajputana, or on places on the confines of those States.

'The system under which the duty is levied, and the rate of duty, vary in the different provinces. In Madras and Bombay the rate of duty is Rs. 1-13 per maund; in Lower Bengal the rate is Rs. 3-4 per maund, and is levied chiefly in the form of a sea-Customs import duty. In the Upper Provinces the rate is Rs. 3 per maund. In the Punjab this is included in the selling price of the rock salt, which is the property of Government. In the rest of the Upper Provinces the duty is levied when the salt is imported from Rajputana.

'For this purpose, and to prevent the ingress of

salt taxed at lower rates, a Customs line is maintained extending from a point north of Attock to near the Berar frontier, a distance of more than 1,500 miles. Similar lines some hundreds of miles in length are established in the Bombay Presidency, to prevent untaxed salt from Native States entering British territory. Along the greater part of this enormous system of inland Customs lines, which, if they were put down in Europe, would stretch from London to Constantinople, a physical barrier has been created comparable to nothing that I can think of except the Great Wall of China. It consists principally of an impenetrable hedge of thorny trees and bushes, supplemented by stone walls and ditches, across which no human being or beast of burden or vehicle can pass without being subjected to detention and search. It is guarded by an army of some 8,000 men, the mass of whom receive as wages Rs. 6 or 7 a month. The bare statement of these facts is sufficient to show the magnitude of the evil.

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'Although I believe that everything is done which can be done under such circumstances to prevent abuses, it may be easily imagined what inevitable and serious obstruction to trade and annoyance and harassment to individuals must take place. I remember a graphic account of Sir George Campbell, in which he described the evils of the system and the instruments, of the nature of cheese-tasters, which are thrust into the goods of everyone whose business takes him across the line. The interference is not confined to the traffic passing into British territory; for, owing to the levy of the export duty on sugar, the same obstructions are offered to the traffic passing in the other direction. In spite, however, of the

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evils inseparable from the existence of a Customs line, it is practically impossible to dispense with it so long as we levy our salt tax at different rates in different provinces, and have no means of controlling the manufacture and taxation of salt produced in Native States until the salt reaches the British frontier.

'The great object at which the Government ought to aim is to give to the people throughout India the means of obtaining, with the least possible inconvenience and at the cheapest rate consistent with financial necessities, a supply of salt, the quantity of which shall be limited only by the capacity of the people for consumption.

'I have a strong belief that more than a hundred millions of people fail now to obtain a full supply of salt. I do not for a moment assert, nor do I believe, that the actual supply is insufficient for the preservation of health. Nor do I at all agree with those who maintain that the salt tax presses with extreme severity on the poorer classes. But, however this may be, it is a great evil that the supply of this necessary of life should be restricted. . . . With the existing means of communication it was a physical impossibility to bring from Rajputana the salt required for some fifty millions of people. That task was one that could not be performed by any number of carts and camels and ponies which it was possible for the country to furnish; and these were the only means of transport. Therefore it was that I have sometimes asserted that there was a salt famine in Northern India; meaning thereby not only that salt was dear, but that sufficient salt could not be provided. For such a condition of things reduction of duty would no more afford a remedy than it would

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be a remedy in a food famine to give money to the people when no food existed in the markets. Lord Mayo saw that there were two essential conditions to be fulfilled before relief could be found. It was necessary to provide cheap means of transport to a practically unlimited extent between the salt of Rajputana and our own markets; and also to make arrangements by which the price of salt to our people should be freed from influences outside our territory. The first condition could only be provided by making railways into Rajputana. The second condition rendered it necessary that our Government should obtain complete control over the manufacture and supply of salt at the chief places of production.'

It is clear from this speech that there were two conditions precedent to the carrying out of the desired reform: first, the completion of the treaties with the Native States within whose territory salt was produced on a large scale; and, secondly, the improvement of the general financial position of the country, which just then was entering on the season of trial and distress caused by the great famine in Madras and Bombay.

In order to carry out the first of these objects Mr. A. O. Hume, C.B., was placed on special duty to negotiate with the Native States concerned. It is interesting to read some extracts from a note written by Lord Lytton to convey his instructions to Mr. Hume in August 1876. They show how thoroughly he had grasped the details, and what care he evinced in thinking out all the steps needed for carrying out this complicated inquiry.

After quoting Mr. George Batten's note, to the effect that the immediate business was to ascertain the situation and capabilities of the different salt

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sources in the Native States, the amount of revenue they derived from their salt works, and the nature and rate of transit duties levied on salt on its journey into British territory, he goes on as follows:

Lord Lytton's Note to Mr. Hume, August 1876

'With regard to the salt works already in existence, it should be ascertained what is the annual out-turn, what is the cost per maund of production, what is the selling price, how the realisations are divided, that is, the share of the manufacturer, the proprietor of the works, and the State; what duty is levied by the State; what is the course of trade and area of consumption; what transit duties are levied on salt, and generally what interests would be affected by the works being placed under the control of the British Government—the assumption being that Excise duties would be levied at the works before the salt was permitted to be removed, and that all other duties on salt of every description, including transit duties, would be abolished.'

Similar inquiries were to be made with regard to the smaller areas of production which it might be proposed to close, and to potential sources not now worked, but which might spring into activity when other salt was excised. 'It should, further, be ascertained who are the persons of local influence, if any, who would be able to help on or to obstruct the measures of the Government, and the best way of enlisting their interests, without in any way bringing them into opposition to the Durbar to which they are subordinate, or in any way interfering with the authority of the Native States, with whom alone the British Government can negotiate.' 'Having ascertained as nearly as possible the value, present and prospective, of the various salt sources in the hands of the Native States, the British Government will be

in a position to determine the amount of compensation which might be paid to those States for the surrender of complete control over the manufacture of salt, and for aiding in the suppression of illicit manufacture. The necessary result of putting an excise duty on all salt manufactured in Rajputana will be to make the people of Rajputana and Central India contribute to the British salt revenue, as the people of Hyderabad and Mysore and nearly every other Native State in India do already. From this source ample funds would be available for the liberal treatment of the Native States concerned, and the British Government would be able to pay them more than they have ever received from their salt, and possibly leave a considerable margin for other purposes.' Salt Duties

By October 1, 1878, these inquiries and negotiations had been completed. All the principal sources of salt production had been taken over on lease and the minor sources closed. Liberal compensation, amounting to 54,000*l.*, was paid to manufacturers and others interested in the salt works which had been suppressed. Annual payments of 84,000*l.* were secured by treaty to the Native States—these payments being equivalent to the duty realised—and a liberal compensation to the chiefs for the salt and transit duties which they and their feudatories would forego. In some cases also large quantities of salt were allowed to be passed free of duty to the people of those States.

The door was now open for the equalisation of the salt duties throughout India, and for the accomplishment of the object which Lord Lytton and Sir John Strachey had so ardently desired. The rate of taxation was raised in Madras and Bombay, and

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Equalisation of Salt Duties carried out, Oct. 1878

lowered in Northern India to Rs. 2-8 per maund (82 lb.); only, in Bengal it was thought impossible on financial grounds to allow the full reduction, and the rate was kept at Rs. 2-14, as against 3-4 before. In this way, while the duty on salt was raised for 47 millions of people, it was lowered for 130 millions. The Customs hedge, so eloquently stigmatised by Sir John Strachey, 2,000 miles in length, was removed, and the sugar duty was abolished, at a financial sacrifice of 155,000*l*. This wise and liberal treatment of so important a necessary of life produced the effects which might naturally have been expected. The consumption of salt in 1879–80 had risen by 12½ per cent. above the consumption of 1876–7. The net salt revenue which in 1876–7 had been less than six millions, rose in 1879–80 to over seven millions.

At the same time the price of salt throughout Northern India was greatly cheapened by the opening of railway communication and the removal of hindrances to the trader. At Agra, where a maund (82 lb.) of salt had cost Rs. 5-8 and 6 in 1868 and 1869, the price of the same salt had fallen in 1879 to Rs. 3-8; so that while the duty had been lowered 16½ per cent., the cost to the consumer was reduced by 40 per cent. The wisdom of the measures taken by the Government of India to cheapen this important article of consumption was thus effectively established.

In the debate on the Budget of 1878–79, Lord Lytton devoted a large portion of his speech (February 9, 1878) to a history of the salt tax from early times and an exposition of his views on the equalisation of the duty, the abolition of the Customs line, and the justifiability of the tax as a source of

revenue. The following quotations from this speech will be read with interest:

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Lord Lytton's Budget Speech, Feb. 9, 1878

'I would now ask permission to state to the Council, in a general way, what we have actually done and what we hope to do in this matter. Our first step was to enter into friendly communication with the Native States I have already mentioned, for the purpose of obtaining their acquiescence in our control over the salt sources in their territories, and thus enabling us to tax all salt at the places of production, and so abolish our present barbarous inland Customs cordon, upon conditions equitable, and indeed liberal, as regards the financial interests of the Native States concerned and the social interests of their subjects. . . .

'I venture to maintain . . . that an equalisation of the salt duties in British territory surrounding the salt-producing Native States is a necessary preliminary to the abolition of the inland Customs line; that, in the advanced stage of our negotiations with those States, it was incumbent on us to lose no time in making an appreciable approach towards the establishment of such an equalisation in our own salt duties, and that no measure adopted for that purpose could practically be confined to the territories I have mentioned. The Madras duty must be on the same level as the Bombay duty, and the duty in Lower Bengal must not be very much higher than the duty in the Upper Provinces; for, otherwise, the dearer salt would be entirely displaced by the cheaper salt, to the great disturbance and injury of trade. Now, I grieve to say that in the present state of our finances it was simply impossible for us to lower the rates in Northern India down to the level of the rates in Southern India. Such a measure would have

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involved the loss of at least one and a-half million sterling of revenue. We had, therefore, to choose between raising the rates in Southern India, without making any simultaneous reduction in the rates of Northern India, or making an addition to the rates in Southern India considerably larger than the simultaneous reduction effected in Northern India. It is the last of these two courses that we have now adopted, in the belief that it is the fairest. We have not raised the rates in Southern India without effecting at least some simultaneous reduction in the rates of Northern India; and I assert that this is more than any previous Government of India has done towards the establishment of an equilibrium in the salt duty upon equitable principles, and at a level which, if high in the first instance, will, I trust, be found susceptible of gradual reduction to a minimum uniform rate. We have raised the Madras and Bombay duties to Rs. 2-8; that is to say, we have increased them by 11 annas per maund; but we have simultaneously lowered the salt duties in the Upper Provinces of Northern India by 4 annas per maund, and in the Lower Provinces by 2 annas per maund; so that at the present moment the salt duty in the Southern Presidencies stands at Rs. 2-8, in Lower Bengal at Rs. 3-2, and in the Northern Provinces at Rs. 2-12 per maund. . . .

'Sincerely as I desire to see the price of salt not only equalised, but cheapened throughout India, earnestly as I hope that it may be the privilege of this Administration to accelerate the arrival of the day when such a result may be attainable, still, I must frankly own that I feel unable to accept the dictum of those who assert that the present salt duties are a grievous burden to the long

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suffering back of the poor ryot. It may be in the power of the Government of India, and I hope, indeed, it may be in the power of the present Government of India, to lighten that burden, such as it is; but it is my own belief that it will never be in the power of any Government of India to devise a substitute for it which will weigh less heavily on the poorer classes or be less sensibly felt by them. A salt tax of Rs. 2–8 per maund is a tax of less than three farthings per pound. It would be absurd to represent the pressure of such a tax as oppressive. The manner in which the tax is levied renders the pressure of it almost inappreciable. It is an indirect impost, distributed, in minute daily instalments, over vast masses of population, and in all probability the majority of the millions who pay it are not even conscious of its existence.

'It is the only obligatory tax imposed by this Government upon the masses; and the total amount of its proceeds, when compared with the numbers from whom it is collected, shows how small is the contribution of each individual. The gross estimated revenue of a salt tax assessed at Rs. 2–8 per maund is about six millions sterling; and this revenue would be collected from a population of not less than 200,000,000 of consumers. On this point I shall again venture to quote the words of Sir William Muir: "If," he said, "there were any form of indirect taxation which could be brought to bear upon the rich rather than upon the poor, and on the luxuries rather than on the necessaries of life, I would at once agree to such a tax; but I know of none that is practicable." And then, after dwelling on the dissatisfaction occasioned by all attempts to extract national revenue from the wealthier classes by direct

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taxes specially imposed on those classes, as compared with the ascertained social results of indirect taxation levied on a commodity which is consumed by rich and poor, and equally necessary for all classes in the community, Sir William Muir concludes by this emphatic record of his own experience: "In the one case," he says, "we stir up angry feelings in every class throughout the country; in the other case we peaceably realise what we require without affecting the contentment and tranquillity of any class."

'I trust, then, I have shown that the recent action of the present Government of India in reference to the salt duties of Madras and Bombay is in complete accordance with the consistent, continuous and repeatedly avowed aim of its predecessors during the last ten years and more. I trust I have shown that of the sincerity of its devotion to the prosecution of that aim the present Government of India has given conspicuous proof by taking, for the attainment of it, bolder and wider steps than any which have been taken by previous Administrations. I trust I have shown that these steps have been taken without deviation from the course prescribed to us by our predecessors. And if I have succeeded in this endeavour, then I think I am entitled to claim from all who have questioned our policy a complete acquittal from the charge that in what we have done we have sacrificed the interests of the poorer classes to those of the richer, with a view to a mere increase of revenue. The point at which we have now arrived is this: the salt duty in Madras, Bombay, Sindh, and the Central Provinces has been equalised at the rate of Rs. 2–8 per maund. In the North-Western Provinces, Oudh, the Punjab and Lower Bengal it still varies between higher rates. The

aim of the present Government will be to reduce those higher rates to the level already reached by the salt duties of Southern India. Nor shall we relax our endeavours to cheapen the price of salt throughout the whole Empire, by improving our means of communication with the sources of supply. I trust that our Administration may last long enough to achieve these long-deferred results; and that my honourable friend, Sir John Strachey, may still be a member of it when we attain the Promised Land to which he first guided our progress, and thus fulfil his eloquent prophecy of the day when the Government of India will have given to the people of India "the means of obtaining, with the least possible inconvenience, and at the cheapest rate consistent with financial necessities, a supply of salt only limited by the people's capacity of consumption."'

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Lord Lytton's Budget Speech, Feb. 9, 1878

In March 1882, Lord Ripon's Government, which had succeeded to the benefits of the financial reforms initiated in Lord Lytton's time, was able to complete this great work by lowering the rate of the salt duty throughout the whole of India, and thereby reducing taxation to the amount of 1,400,000*l.*

### Cotton Duties and Free Trade

There had been for many years a growing feeling in England that the duty of 5 per cent. *ad valorem* levied on the import of cotton goods was a serious hindrance to the trade of Manchester, and protected the Indian manufacturer in a manner subversive of the principles of political economy. Lord Northbrook, in 1875, had said on this subject: 'Indian statesmen have never regarded Customs duties as desirable for the purpose of protecting

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the products or manufactures of India. In India, equally as in England, Protection has been regarded as an exploded doctrine, contrary to the general interests of the country which imposes protection duties.' And in 1876 the discussion was closed by the Secretary of State, who wrote, 'that the interests of India imperatively require the timely removal of a tax which is at once wrong in principle, injurious in its practical effect, and self-destructive in its operation.' Lord Lytton came to India fully imbued with the wisdom of this policy, and he took the earliest possible opportunity of making known his opinion on the subject and the limitations under which he felt himself bound to carry it out. On April 20, 1876, addressing the Calcutta Trades Association, he said: 'So far as I am aware, nobody in or out of India seriously desires to see the cotton duties maintained for purely protective purposes. It is, therefore, only as an item of revenue that their maintenance can be properly advocated. . . . Were our finances in such a condition as to admit of any reduction in those sources of revenue which are derived from taxes on consumption, I must frankly say I would gladly see our tariff purged not only of these cotton duties, but also of some others. . . . Starting, as we do this year, with a surplus unavoidably reduced to the very narrowest limits . . . I think no one responsible for the administration of this Empire would at present venture to make even the smallest reduction in any of its limited sources of revenue.'

'Financial Statements,' p. 156

When the time came for framing the Budget of 1877–78, it became evident that in the face of the famine then impending in Madras and Bombay it was impossible to carry out the desired abolition, or even reduction, of the duties. Lord Lytton said in his

speech of March 28, 1877: 'The Secretary of State has distinctly affirmed and established the principle by which he intends our action to be guided, and the discretion he has left to us extends only to the time and mode which we may deem most suitable and most efficacious for carrying that principle into practical effect. In the exercise of that discretion we have reluctantly recognised . . . the practical impossibility of any present reduction of the import duty on cotton goods.'

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Lord Lytton's Speech, March 28, 1877

Sir John Strachey, in his speech on the same occasion, emphatically declared, on behalf of the Viceroy and himself, their determination to carry out this reform at the earliest opportunity which the state of the finances might admit, and also looked forward to the possible abolition of all Customs duties in India:

'I altogether disbelieve that there is in this matter any conflict between Indian and English interests; I am satisfied that these interests are identical, and that they alike require the abolition of this tax. I will not speculate on what ought to have been done if the case had been different; but there is one thing which I wish to take this opportunity of saying. We are often told that it is the duty of the Government of India to think of Indian interests alone, and that if the interests of Manchester suffer it is no affair of ours. For my part, I utterly repudiate such doctrines. I have not ceased to be an Englishman because I have passed the greater part of my life in India, and have become a member of the Indian Government. The interests of Manchester, at which foolish people sneer, are the interests not only of the great and intelligent population engaged directly in the trade in cotton, but of millions of Englishmen. . . .

Sir John Strachey's Budget Speech, March 28, 1877

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Sir John Strachey's Speech, March 28, 1877

'It is important, in my opinion, not only on its own account, but for the results which may follow hereafter. The net sea-Customs revenue proper of India amounted in 1875–76 to 2,475,530*l.*, of which the duties on cotton goods yielded 850,000*l.* When the cotton duties are removed there will remain export duties on rice, indigo, and lac yielding together 620,000*l.*, and import duties on a multitude of articles yielding 930,000*l.* Excluding the duties on cotton goods, the export and import duties together give 1,550,000*l.* Many of these duties are so objectionable that it is impossible that they can last; and can it be supposed that we should long continue to maintain huge establishments for the purpose of levying the small remnant of revenue that might survive? The truth is that cotton goods are the sole article of foreign production which the people of India largely consume, and there is no possibility of deriving a large Customs revenue from anything else. I do not know how long a period may elapse before such a consummation is reached; but, whether we see it or not, the time is not hopelessly distant when the ports of India will be thrown open freely to the commerce of the world.'[1]

Action of House of Commons

'Financial Statements,' p. 324

On July 11, 1877, the House of Commons adopted without a division the following important resolution: 'That, in the opinion of this House, the duties now levied upon cotton manufactures imported into India, being protective in their nature, are contrary to sound commercial policy, and ought to be repealed without delay, so soon as the financial condition of India will admit.' The stimulus of this resolution, though not needed to induce Lord Lytton to take the pre-

[1] Sir John Strachey's speech before Council: *Financial Statements*, p. 157.

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scribed steps, helped to remove public opposition to the reform. Indian cotton being coarser and shorter in staple than American, imported goods were mostly finer in quality than those locally manufactured, and such goods were hardly subject to competition. But those made of yarns whose numbers, in technical language, was below 30, were of the same character as Indian goods, and therefore were handicapped by having to pay a 5 per cent. duty. Accordingly, the duty on certain coarse goods, as to which there could be no doubt that they were of the kinds with which Indian manufactures competed successfully, was removed; and the opportunity was taken to purge the tariff of twenty-six other heads which either produced very small amounts or affected the food of the poorer classes, leaving only thirty-five out of the sixty-two tariff numbers of the Tariff Act of 1875.

'Financial Statements,' p. 324

This partial reduction, however, failed to satisfy the demands of Manchester, and created new and unforeseen embarrassments in the operations of trade. As to the former, the Secretary of State wrote: 'The impost is too much at variance with the declared policy of this country to be permanently upheld; but if the task of dealing with it be long postponed, it will be the subject of controversy between interests far more powerful and embittered than those which are contending over it at the present moment. . . . I need hardly insist further on the danger of keeping open between two great communities of Her Majesty's subjects an irritating controversy which can be closed by one and only one solution. It is difficult to overstate the evil of permitting an industry so large as the cotton manufacture in India is certain to become to grow up under the influence of a system

'Financial Statements,' p. 327

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which a wide experience has proved to be unsound, and which is opposed to the deliberate policy of England.' As to the second point, the embarrassment to trade was caused by the fact that there was little essential difference between the cloths which have been exempted and large classes of cloths, otherwise styled, which have not. A Commission was appointed, of which Sir T. C. Hope was the leading member, to look into the question, and they reported that 'the only effective remedy is to treat similarly, whether by exemption or taxation, all cloths of the same texture, irrespective of the lengths and widths in which they happen to be made up or the names by which people may choose to call them.' Accordingly, the Financial Statement for 1879–80 declared that 'the Governor-General in Council considers that the facts reported by the Commission . . . show conclusively that adherence to the tentative measures of last year is not possible. It is not reasonable that certain goods should be admitted free, while large quantities of goods of almost precisely the same character in everything but name remain liable to duty. No measure falling short of the exemption from duty of all cotton goods containing no yarn finer than 30's can be defended; and this measure can no longer be delayed. Its adoption will for the present, at least, remove the directly protective character of these duties. . . . A Notification has accordingly now been published, exempting from import duty all cotton goods containing no yarn of a higher number than 30's.' This exemption was estimated to cost 150,000*l.*, in addition to the loss incurred by the previous year's reductions; and the following paragraphs explain the grounds on which the Government thought it right to incur this sacrifice

'Financial Statements,' p. 322

of revenue, in spite of the financial difficulties caused by the Afghan war: Cotton Duties

'The pledges given from time to time in regard to the gradual removal of the duties on cotton goods have always been made subject to the condition that their fulfilment must depend on the position of the Indian finances. It certainly cannot now be asserted, in the face of the great and increasing loss occasioned by the fall in the value of silver in relation to gold, that the financial condition of India is satisfactory, although every branch of the public revenue is prosperous, and, with the exception which has been mentioned, no fresh causes for financial anxiety are apparent. . . . 'Financial Statements,' pp. 325–26

'The real question which the Governor-General in Council has had to consider is this: Ought the Government to look upon the fresh financial difficulties arising from the fall in the exchange as a sufficient reason for refusing to sanction any further remission in the duty on cotton goods? And this question, his Excellency in Council considered, must be answered in the negative. The injury and loss which these duties are causing both to the English producer and to the Indian consumer, and to the true interests of Indian commerce and manufactures, are certain. Measures which, for the present at least, will almost completely remove the protective, and therefore the most objectionable, feature in these duties can be taken without surrendering any very considerable amount of revenue. The difficulties caused by the increased loss by exchange are great, but they will not practically be aggravated to an appreciable extent by the loss of 200,000*l*. If the fresh fall in the exchange should prove to be temporary, such a loss will possess slight importance. If, on the other

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hand, the loss by exchange does not diminish, and no other remedies can be applied, it will become necessary to take measures of a most serious nature for the improvement of the financial position; but the retention of the import duties on cotton goods will not thereby be rendered possible. On the contrary, such retention will become more difficult than ever.'

The objections urged by members of the Indian Government to the remission of duty on all so-called grey-cotton goods were without doubt honourably and conscientiously formed, but the popular opposition which the measure excited in India arose in part from a suspicion that because the abolition of Custom's duties would be favourable to English manufacturers, therefore it was advocated for the sake of obtaining political support in Lancashire, and not out of regard for the interests of India. Lord Lytton, however, having convinced himself that the essential interests of India required the measure, was not to be deterred by the imputation of such motives. He saw that the case must either be met then and there by a bold and sufficient policy, or must be allowed to drift on to the serious discredit of the Government and the injury of the country. He accordingly had the courage to bring forward a measure exempting certain cotton goods from Customs duty on March 13, 1879, and carried it in opposition to the majority of his Council, but on the advice of the Financial Member, Sir John Strachey. This step was constitutionally possible under a well-known Act of 1870 authorising the Governor-General to overrule a majority of his Council.

Few things caused Lord Lytton greater regret

than that he was unable in his last year of office, by reason of financial difficulties, to carry further his policy of abolishing the remains of the cotton duties, as well as all import duties, except those on salt, alcoholic liquor, and arms. In his speech in the Budget debate of 1880–81 (March 2, 1880) he said: 'I must remind the Council that in every one of our Financial Statements for the last three years the complete abolition of the cotton duties has been openly avowed as the ultimate aim of the policy we have been pursuing, in accordance with the repeated resolutions of the House of Commons and repeated instructions from the Secretary of State. Every step taken by myself toward the attainment of this object has been restrained only by considerations of time, opportunity and expediency, never by disapproval of the goal to which, at every stage, those steps were tending, and to which from the outset they were addressed. . . . I will not stop to discuss whether the consumers of the goods we have already cheapened are Englishmen or Indians. But what is the present practical effect upon Indian interests of the continued duty upon English cotton? Why, they are tempting or driving the English manufacturer in one direction, and the Indian manufacturer in another direction, to the manufacture of cloths which neither of them would wish to make, were it not that one desires to escape the duty, whilst the other desires to produce goods protected by it. From those who still suppose that the pressure of a 5 per cent. duty on cotton imports is too light to have any appreciable effect let me solicit consideration of the serious extent to which the whole character of the trade has already been actually changed by it.'

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Lord Lytton' Budget Speech, March 2, 1880

To the same effect Sir John Strachey said on the

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'Financial Statements,' pp. 404–406

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same occasion: 'The measures taken during the last two years . . . have at least effected the particular object for which they were declared necessary. They have for the present removed all ground for the complaint that we were levying protective duties in favour of the Indian mills in their competition with English manufacturers. . . . When, last year, your Excellency decided that it was impossible to defend the maintenance of the duty on certain classes of cotton goods because it had a distinctly protective character, it was thought right to make a considerable sacrifice of revenue for its immediate removal . . .; but the Government feels that it cannot at the present moment go further, or submit to loss of revenue beyond that which the measures of the last two years have rendered unavoidable.' . . . 'It is impossible to deny that the present state of things is anomalous and objectionable. The Government will give to this question in the future that constant attention which its importance demands, but it cannot at the present moment make the large sacrifice of revenue which its complete solution would involve, and as a provisional arrangement meanwhile it does not seem possible to draw any line better than that drawn last year. The abolition of the remaining duties on cotton goods would cost us 600,000*l.*, in addition to the 250,000*l.* which we have given up already.'

As in the case of the salt duties, so in the case of the cotton duties, it was the good fortune of Lord Ripon to complete easily in 1882 what had been thus laboriously begun in 1878 and 1879. The estimates for 1882–83 showed a surplus of over three millions, and Major Baring (now Lord Cromer) was thus enabled, acting on the same principles and using

almost the same arguments as those of Lord Lytton and Sir John Strachey, to abolish the cotton duties and all import duties, except those on wines and spirits, arms and salt, thereby remitting taxation to the amount of 1,200,000*l.*[1]

Cotton Duties and Free Trade

## Provincial Contracts

The third of the heads of the financial reform which Lord Lytton placed before himself as one of the chief objects to be attained during his Viceroyalty was the development of the system of provincial assignments. It is a rather technical matter, but the importance he attached to it is illustrated by the terms in which he wrote of it in a letter to H.M. the Queen on March 10, 1877: 'The new principles of financial decentralisation and provincial responsibility which, with the valuable aid of Sir John Strachey, I have been able to introduce and carry into partial effect this year, will eventually, I trust, afford considerable relief to the Imperial Treasury.'

The nature of the measures referred to will be best understood by quoting some extracts from the Budget speech of Sir John Strachey (March 15, 1877), under whose advice the first steps in this direction had been taken by Lord Mayo in 1870. Up to that time the central Government had retained in its own hands the entire control of the finances and the distribution of funds to the provincial Governments. 'The ordinary financial condition of India had been

'Financial Statements,' p. 134

[1] Unfortunately, under the pressure of financial difficulties, it was subsequently found necessary to abandon, it may be hoped for a time only, a policy so enlightened and so beneficial to the people of India. The tax upon salt was increased, and import duties are now levied, for revenue purposes, upon almost every article of commerce.

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one of chronic deficit, and one of the main causes of this state of affairs had been the impossibility of resisting the constantly increasing demands of the local Governments for the means of providing every kind of improvement for their respective provinces. Their demands were practically unlimited because there was no limit to their legitimate wants; they had a purse to draw on of unlimited, because unknown, depth; they saw on every side the necessity for improvement, and their constant and justifiable desire was to obtain for their own provinces and people as large a share as they could persuade the Government of India to give them out of the general revenues of the Empire.' . . . 'The distribution of public income,' writes General Richard Strachey, 'degenerates into something like a scramble, in which the most violent has the advantage, with little attention to reason. As local economy tends to no local advantage, the stimulus to avoid waste is reduced to a minimum; as no local growth of the income leads to an increase of the local means of improvement, interest in developing the public revenue is also brought down to the lowest level.' Adopting these views, Lord Mayo selected eight heads of expenditure in which the increase had been largest and most constant, and transferred them to the local Governments, with a fixed grant of money, out of which to meet all demands, and with power to utilise any savings which could be effected on other improvements of which the province stood most in need.

The effect of the new system had been found, after six years' experience, to be thoroughly satisfactory, not only in preventing the growth of expenditure, but also in diminishing correspondence and friction between the local and supreme Governments, and

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enabling the local Governments to carry out many improvements which would otherwise have been impracticable. It now remained to develop the system and to extend it to an assignment of such sources of revenue as depend for their productiveness on good administration, and thus to bring the self-interest of the provincial Governments to bear on such improvements in administration. 'It may be very wrong,' said Sir John Strachey, 'but it is true, and will continue to be true while human nature remains what it is, that the local authorities take little interest in looking after the financial affairs of that abstraction, the supreme Government, compared with the interest which they take in matters which immediately affect the people whom they have to govern.' In making all these transfers, whether of revenue or expenditure, a small margin was retained, on the assumption that the local Government would be able to recoup it by stricter attention to finance, and the normal annual rise in the revenue heads was to be shared between the local and supreme Governments in fixed proportions. In this way the original measures taken in 1870 had produced a saving of 330,000*l.*, and the new arrangements made with the Governments of Bengal and of the North-West Provinces and Oudh, which alone had been completed when the Budget of 1877–78 was brought in, were estimated to effect a saving to the Imperial Treasury of 145,700*l.*; and in 1878–79 the completed arrangements were estimated to improve the financial position of the Government of India by 400,000*l.* In spite of this saving the transaction was calculated on so liberal a scale that in 1880, when the treasury of the supreme Government was depleted by the cost of the Afghan war and the loss by the fall in exchange, the provincial treasuries were

Sir John Strachey's Budget Speech, March 15, 1877

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so overflowing that they were able to supply a contribution of 670,000*l.* to the general needs of the Empire. Notwithstanding this large contribution, as the Viceroy pointed out in his speech in the Budget debate of 1880–81, 'the provincial balances of the local Governments will be actually larger by nearly half a million than the sum at which they were estimated at the beginning of the year.'

Thus, with equal advantage to the supreme and to the provincial Governments, was carried out this great and far-reaching reform, which more than any financial measure of the time has set its mark on the administration of the country. Initiated by Lord Mayo, it received its full development at the hands of Lord Lytton. Since then more than twenty years have elapsed; contract after contract has been made, with little or no variation of system; but no voice has been raised against the grand principle of decentralisation, and everyone is agreed that it has been the most fruitful and seminal reform which has been introduced within the knowledge of the living generation.

### Extraordinary Public Works

The remaining financial reform which Lord Lytton proposed to himself in 1876 was the revision of the system under which the cost of the so-called 'Extraordinary Public Works' was defrayed from borrowed money, and became an addition to the public debt, being kept outside the ordinary Budget. The works thus treated were railway and irrigation works. A programme was drawn up in 1873 of the most important projects of these two classes, the estimated cost of which was over thirty-six millions ster-

ling; and it was held that it was safe to borrow this sum, because the revenue arising from them would be equal to the interest on the debt incurred. The amount to be borrowed annually was fixed at four and a half millions up to 1875, and was reduced to four millions in that year. Sir John Strachey, however, showed in his Budget speech of 1877–78 that the scheme required modification and revision. The revenue produced by the works had not increased as fast as the interest on the money borrowed. Some of the works included in the programme—*e.g.* the railways on the Punjab and Sindh frontier—were not, and could not be expected to be, remunerative. They were, no doubt, very beneficial to the country through which they passed, but were undertaken, not on financial grounds, but because they were considered for political and military reasons to be essential to the service of the Empire. Works of this kind were to be classed as ordinary, not as extraordinary works, and were to be paid for out of revenue. The remaining works, which were expected to be really remunerative, were divided into two classes. The first were those undertaken for objects of such general utility that they might fairly be called Imperial. Such were the great trunk lines of railway, which not only confer immense benefits on the provinces through which they pass, but are essential to the wealth and prosperity of the Empire. The cost of constructing them might therefore fairly fall on the Empire at large. The second class were those great works of improvement which are primarily of provincial or local utility, undertaken for the special benefit of certain districts or places, with the object of increasing their wealth or protecting them against famine; the irrigation canals in Orissa, Behar, and the North-West

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'Financial Statements,' p. 130

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Provinces, or the Northern Bengal and Tirhoot railways, may be cited as instances. It was shown that the interest on the capital sunk in these works exceeded the return by 100,000*l.* in the North-West Provinces, and by 275,000*l.* in Bengal; and the new principle laid down was that the inhabitants of these provinces, and not the general taxpayer, should provide these sums. In many cases, no doubt, the loss would in a few years be turned into a profit, and then that profit would be shared between the provincial and Imperial Treasuries; but for the present the loss was to be met by provincial taxation. In closing the debate which followed this speech, Lord Lytton (March 28, 1877) referred to this question in the following terms:

Debate on the Budget Statement, March 28, 1877

Lord Lytton's speech

'There is one of the announcements made by my honourable colleague in his Financial Statement which no honourable member has yet noticed, but on which I congratulate myself, and on which I think the public may also be congratulated. I allude to the announcement that although, indeed, we cannot at present apply the new rule to existing works, yet the expenditure on all unremunerative public works which may hereafter be undertaken will be carefully excluded from extraordinary account. This is a change of policy decided on by the Secretary of State when Lord Northbrook was Viceroy; but it has never before been publicly announced as the rule we intend to follow. Now, it may be said that this rule is a mere reform in book-keeping; in fact, that it is a very small matter. I admit that it is a small matter if it goes no further; but it will certainly not be my fault, nor that of my honourable colleague, if it does not go a great deal further; and if it only goes far enough, I maintain that it is a very great matter. So far as it does go, it is a step in the

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right direction; for I share the doubt expressed by Sir John Strachey, whether our extraordinary Budgets have not been altogether a mistake. In the course of an official life which at least began early, it has frequently been my hard lot to grope my way with the greatest difficulty through the financial accounts of Continental Governments, in order to place before my own Government an accurate estimate of their financial situation. And a system which I have more than once officially described as vicious and misleading—a system which has, I confess, sorely tried my temper when adopted by other Governments—is certainly not one which I can regard without reluctance as the system to be permanently pursued by the Government of India. The French Government, to its credit, has already abandoned that system. I have heard it said that our own system is exempt from the objections which apply to the extraordinary Budgets of Continental States, since we do not put into our Extraordinary Budget any expenditure which ought properly to be carried to ordinary account. But I do not think we are entitled to lay that flattering unction to our souls. As a matter of fact, we have put into our extraordinary account many charges which ought to have been carried to ordinary account. However Spartan may be our financial virtue, still we are but human; and, in my opinion, the whole system of extraordinary account is a perilous temptation to human weakness. . . . No man who has studied intelligently the past history of Indian finance will regard as unfounded the fears expressed by my honourable colleague, that the system hitherto followed, of jumbling up together remunerative and unremunerative public works in an account, to which the term 'extraordinary' is extremely

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applicable, has tended to make us less chary than we should otherwise have been in spending money upon them. For my own part, I am not at all afraid of the deficits which we might have to show by a change of system. What I do regard with fear and distrust is everything which may tend to conceal those deficits unduly from our own eyes or from those of the public. The first step towards getting rid of deficit is to look it frankly in the face. Nature abhors a vacuum; and the recognition of a financial vacuum is so revolting to ordinary human nature, that our best chance of filling it up consists in never losing sight of it. My honourable colleague has shown that during the last seven years, while our expenditure has remained stationary, our income has steadily increased; and I am convinced that our financial character has everything to gain, and nothing to fear, if only public criticism be furnished with accurate data for the guidance of impartial judgments.'

In the course of this year the orders of the Secretary of State were received abolishing the title of 'Extraordinary Public Works,' and substituting that of 'Productive Public Works,' in order to emphasise the principle that works not expected to be productive of revenue sufficient to cover their working expenses and the interest on capital outlay should be constructed in future out of ordinary revenue, and not out of loans. A new table was attached to the Financial Statement, in order to show on one side the working expenses and interest due on all productive works, on the other side the revenue derived from them: and for the year 1877–78 this table showed on the one side 7,359,204*l.* as the expenditure, while on the other the yield of revenue was 7,319,356*l.* This

statement was justly characterised as 'encouraging, for much of the expenditure was, necessarily, at the time unproductive, and the direct revenue produced to the State is but a small part of the advantages which result from these works to the country.

Extraordinary Public Works Lord Lytton's Budget Speech, March 28, 1877

## Famine Insurance Taxation

The foregoing account shows the manner in which the four great problems in financial administration which presented themselves to Lord Lytton at the commencement of his Viceroyalty were effectively solved. A brief description remains to be given of another series of measures, the necessity of which he had not, and could not have, anticipated, but which were forced upon him by the occurrence of the great famine in the southern part of the peninsula. Up to this time the Government of India had treated famines empirically, as they occurred, not on a settled principle; but it now became clear that they were not to be looked upon as exceptional calamities, but as events liable and certain to recur, and that provision must be made for their prevention and relief out of the ordinary revenue, and not by borrowing. The famine expenditure during the last five years had been 16,000,000*l.* Such a period of extreme calamity was believed to be exceptional, but it was held that the cost of famine relief must be estimated at fifteen millions every ten years, or 1,500,000*l.* a year on an average. Omitting famine, the revenue and expenditure had, during the seven years preceding 1877, been in equilibrium, leaving no margin for contingencies. It was shown by Sir J. Strachey, in his speech of December 27, 1877, that a margin of about half a million ought to be secured, so that the total

Famine Insurance Fund

improvement required in the finances amounted to two millions. Of the 1,500,000*l.* required for famine charges 400,000*l.* had been provided by the measures of provincial decentralisation already described, and there remained 1,100,000*l.* to be raised. For this purpose new taxation was necessary, and it took the form of cesses on the land in Bengal and the upper provinces, estimated to bring in 500,000*l.*, and a license tax on trades (an extension of the tax already levied in the North-West Provinces), which was to realise 700,000*l.*, and which fell on every trader having an income above Rs. 100 a year. The grounds for this taxation were explained and defended by Lord Lytton in his speech in the Legislative Council on February 9, 1878: 'Undoubtedly the taxes which will come into operation by the passing of the Bills before us must, to be successful, have a wide incidence. . . . But Sir J. Strachey has already shown that it would be a gross misrepresentation of the present license tax to say that it falls only on the very poor; and, indeed, as a matter of fact, this tax touches no section of the community which can be regarded or rated as other than a well-to-do class. . . .

Lord Lytton's Speech in Council, February 9, 1878

'We have felt that the two great classes of the community from whom we could most equitably collect our Famine Insurance Fund are the trading and agricultural classes. . . . The necessity of a Famine Insurance Fund, and the duty of Government to provide such a fund, have been generally acknowledged. But equally general must be, I think, the acknowledgment that in our selection of the sources of this fund, which are necessarily limited, we could not, with any show of reason or justice, have maintained the agricultural cess in Bengal had we shrunk from subjecting to a similar obligation the

agricultural classes in other provinces in Northern India. Nor is it less undeniable that, from the same point of view and for the same reason, we could not justly maintain the license tax upon the trading classes of the other provinces if we did not impose it also on the trading classes of Lower Bengal. I think, then, I may fairly claim for the measures now before the Council at least the modest merit of an equitable distribution of famine charges between the two great classes of the community best able to bear them, and on whom such charges most reasonably fall.'

Famine Insurance Fund

The remaining half-million needed to provide a margin against other exceptional expenditure was provided by the equalisation of the salt tax, already described, which was estimated to produce 300,000*l.*, and by the normal growth of the ordinary revenue.

Thus was created the famous Famine Insurance Fund, respecting which more misunderstanding has existed and more misrepresentations have been uttered than about any other question connected with the often misunderstood and misrepresented subject of Indian finance. It has frequently been supposed that the Government undertook to earmark this particular sum of $1\frac{1}{2}$ million, and to apply it only to famine relief, or to the construction of productive works; and that if in any year it could be shown that a less sum than $1\frac{1}{2}$ million had been so applied, then the Government might be held to have failed to perform its pledges. Sir J. Strachey, in his speech in the Legislative Council on February 9, 1878, set himself to prevent this error: 'We start with the hypothesis that in every ten years the Government of India will have to spend 15 millions on the relief of famine. If we provide for this purpose a *bona-fide*

'Financial Statements,' p. 268

Famine Insurance Fund

surplus of 1½ million a year for ten years we shall have obtained our 15 millions. As we cannot keep our annual savings locked up in a separate box, it is inevitable that when the actual necessity for spending the 15 millions arises we shall have to borrow the money, so that what we have practically to do is this: we must reduce our debt by 1½ million year by year during the whole period. Then, when the necessity for spending the 15 millions arises we can borrow that amount, and be no worse off than we were ten years before.' He then went on to explain that the Government was pledged to borrow every year at least 2½ millions for the construction of productive public works: 'It would be obviously absurd to pay off every year debt to the amount of 1,500,000*l.*, and simultaneously to incur fresh debt to the same extent. What, therefore, we have to do in the actual circumstances of the case is, by applying to the construction of these works the proceeds of the new taxes, to reduce by 1,500,000*l.* a year the sum which we might otherwise have borrowed.'

The system thus established by the Government of Lord Lytton for protecting the country against the financial consequences of famine has been from time to time modified, but it has been substantially followed ever since. It has fulfilled financially the designs of its authors, and its maintenance has from the time of its establishment until now been treated as essential to a sound administration of the finances of India. The sum of 1,500,000*l.* is now set aside every year from revenue under the head of 'Famine Relief and Insurance.'

When properly understood it is evident in the nature of things that a malversation or misappro-

priation of this fund is impossible. Whatever calamity may arise to sweep away the surplus and land the Government of India in deficit, the amount of that deficit must be less than it would otherwise have been by exactly the amount brought into the Treasury by the taxes imposed in 1877–78 to create the Famine Insurance Fund.

Famine Insurance Fund

Necessary, however, as was the taxation for Insurance against Famine, its imposition embittered a section of the native community, and has often been charged against Lord Lytton as a source of unpopularity and a blot on his general administration. But those who bring such charges are apt to forget how much was done, on the other hand, to reduce taxation and to relieve its incidence on the general population. In March 1880 it was ascertained that the actual receipts from the new taxes had been—from the cesses on land, 525,000*l.*; from the license tax, 820,000*l.*; making a total of 1,345,000*l.* This amount was diminished in that year by exempting from the license tax all incomes below Rs. 500 a year, a reduction of Rs. 340,000 leaving the total sum of famine insurance taxation at almost exactly 1,000,000*l.* On the other hand, the Government during the same period gave up 150,000*l.* from salt, 150,000*l.* from the inland sugar duties, and 300,000*l.* from import duties on cotton goods and a multitude of other articles, and the export duties on indigo and lac; besides enforcing measures which practically killed the remaining cotton duties and all import duties except those on salt, alcoholic liquors and arms; so that they were abandoned, and a further remission of 1,100,000*l.* was secured within the next two years. If, therefore, the gratitude of the country to a Viceroy is founded on the narrow basis of calculating the

'Financial Statements,' p. 308

balance of taxation imposed and removed, Lord Lytton fully deserves that gratitude.

### Error in War Estimates

The close of Lord Lytton's Indian administration was clouded by the discovery of an error in the estimates of the cost of the Afghan war. It is probable that the important and far-reaching financial reforms carried during his Viceroyalty are less widely known to the public than this unfortunate error in accounts. It was discovered at a time when the Viceroy's opponents were only too glad to make political capital out of any blunder which they could lay at his door, and they even stooped to accuse those responsible for the Indian Government of wilful concealment and deception. Sufficient time, however, has now elapsed for the matter to be considered dispassionately, and while acknowledging that the error was a singularly unfortunate one at the moment at which it occurred, a statement of the facts is enough to show that its effect on the finances of the country was not a lasting one. The very next year the Government of India realised a surplus. It cannot therefore detract from the honour and credit due to Lord Lytton and his Finance Minister, Sir John Strachey, for the statesmanship and far-seeing wisdom of their general financial administration. The history of this blunder is as follows:

In March 1880 the war expenditure was calculated to be likely to stand at nine and a half millions, of which nearly four millions were the cost of the frontier railways leading to Quettah. It was, indeed, stated that 'the estimates must be to a great extent

speculative,' but they had been prepared with great care by the Accountant-General of the Military Department, and their accuracy up to that time was supposed to have been highly creditable to him. In other words, Sir John Strachey and the Government of India, though the Finance Department were not the authors of the estimate, made themselves responsible for it. It was felt, therefore, as a crushing blow to the credit of the Government when it was discovered, at the end of 1880, that the expense of the war had been greatly under-estimated. By the end of March five millions of actual outlay had occurred of which the Government was not aware at the time the Budget was prepared and published; and the total cost of the war (partly through its prolonged duration) was found ultimately to be seventeen and a half million pounds, or twelve millions in excess of the estimate. That the estimate of future expenditure should have been falsified was neither unusual nor surprising. No one anticipated in March 1880 that the operations beyond the frontier would continue till nearly the end of 1880; but the error made in failing to obtain even approximate information as to the expenditure which had actually occurred caused a widespread want of confidence in the soundness of the Indian financial system. The explanation of the mistake was that the Military Accounts Department, following an old and faulty system, took note only of the classified and audited accounts, not of the actual outgoings from the treasuries. In ordinary times the audit keeps pace fairly with the expenditure; but in war large disbursements have to be made under great pressure, and with little regard to form and technicalities, and the Audit Department falls into arrears and toils painfully behind. Thus it

Error in War Estimates

Error in War Estimates

happened that the Military Accountant-General presented to the Financial Department of the Government figures which were altogether incorrect, and, the system which they trusted having failed them, the Government were left in ignorance of facts of essential importance. But though the error was lamentable, a simple set of departmental orders sufficed to correct the system and to prevent the possibility of the recurrence of any similar mistake; and no evil results actually followed from the miscalculation. No item in the policy of the Government would have been altered had the cost of the war been more accurately gauged and foreseen. Aided by the timely contribution of five millions from the English Treasury, the finances of India showed a wonderful power of resisting the unexpected strain. There were deficits of about a million in 1879–80, and four millions in 1880–1; these were entirely due to the war, but for which those years would have returned surpluses of over four and six millions respectively. But in 1881 there was a surplus of one and a half million, and in 1882–83 a surplus of over three millions, which enabled the Government to carry out the large reductions in taxation which I have mentioned. This prosperity may fairly be attributed to the sound basis upon which Lord Lytton's administration had placed the finances of India.

Although the magnitude of this error in the war estimates was not known before Lord Lytton left India, the fact that such an error existed was realised. Lord Lytton wrote to Lord Cranbrook on May 11, 1880:

'All other revelations sink into insignificance before the tremendous discovery now made by the Financial Department, that the war estimates pre-

Error in War Estimates

pared by the Military Department, confidently recommended by it to the Financial Department, and adopted by the latter without misgiving, were utterly worthless and will be indefinitely exceeded. . . . The public scandal and reproach of it must, I fear, fall directly upon myself, and indirectly upon Sir John Strachey; and although I hold that we are both of us blameless—for I am unable to conceive how either of us could have anticipated or prevented it—yet I can scarcely complain of the popular verdict I anticipated, for of course the external responsibility of the Government of India cannot be subdivided. . . . Ever since the commencement of the first campaign in Afghanistan I have laboured without ceasing and under great difficulties to keep down military expenditure. . . But I have always carefully refrained from questioning or interfering with the final estimates framed and passed by the responsible departments for sanctioned charges. Any other course would have involved tampering with the public accounts by the head of the Government, and been destructive of that established sense of personal and departmental responsibility which is the best, and indeed the only, guarantee for the conscientious preparation and verification of estimates by the authorities properly charged with that task. . . . I cannot help feeling, with considerable bitterness, that the powers of military darkness, against whom I have been maintaining single-handed for four years such a fatiguing, and till now not unsuccessful, struggle, have in the last hours of my administration contrived to give me a *croc aux jambes* which no vigilance on my part could have prevented, and which no explanations on their part or on mine can now solve.'

# CHAPTER XI

## VERNACULAR PRESS BILL

In the Spring of 1878 an important measure was passed by Lord Lytton's Government to deal with seditious publications in the vernacular press. This measure was reversed by his successor only to be brought back in a different form by force of events, after twenty years of deliberate refusal to face a growing evil had led to the murders at Poona, the prosecution of Tiluk, and the incarceration of the Natus. Then the policy was reconsidered and the law altered in a direction differing from Lord Lytton's scheme, in so far as that aimed at preventing while the new law aims at punishing seditious writings.

Since 1835 the law on the subject of the press required that every printer and publisher should register himself, and that on every issue of a paper the name of printer and publisher should appear. During the Mutiny of 1857 a short-lived Act was passed placing restrictions on the press, but these were, as a matter of fact, directed against the papers published in English; the vernacular journals did not at that time attract attention. Some five or six years afterwards the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal (Sir Cecil Beadon) arranged for a weekly abstract to be prepared of the more important articles in the native press and caused them to be circulated among officials

History of the Act

and made available to the English press. The growing license of the vernacular press was probably the cause, while the revision in 1870 of the Penal Code afforded the opportunity of inserting in the law a section directed against seditious writing. The section had originally been drafted by Macaulay and his co-operators, but had for some reason, apparently through inadvertence, found no place in the code when first passed into law.

The section, however, introduced in the Penal Code of 1870 to the effect that writers attempting to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government should be punished was so hedged round by legal definitions of what could or could not be called disaffection, that both before and after Lord Lytton's time the Government of India were advised by their law officers not to prosecute, even in very flagrant cases, because the view which might be taken of the law was uncertain, and the law therefore practically remained a dead letter.

We find Lord Northbrook's Government issuing a warning (unofficial and outside the law) in 1872 to a Bengali paper the 'Som Prakásh.' The next year the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal (Sir G. Campbell) called attention to the growth of the evil and urged on Lord Northbrook a much more stringent law. In the particular case the 'registered' printer and 'registered' proprietor of the offending newspaper were college students of eighteen and twenty years respectively, so that a successful prosecution would have been of little value as an example, but Lord Northbrook's Government saw no necessity at that time for altering the law. The correspondence, however, had two useful results. It showed the position of registered printers and proprietors, and it led to the weekly abstract of the native press being made henceforth

History of the Act

a confidential document, at which the vernacular press exclaimed that it was oppressed and its influence seriously curtailed. The next move came from London. In 1875 the Secretary of State (Lord Salisbury) informed the Government of India that his attention had been drawn by writings in the 'Pall Mall Gazette' and another paper to various articles in the native press 'which are not only calculated to bring the Government into contempt, but which palliate, if they do not absolutely justify as a duty, the assassination of British Officers.' He added that the unchecked dissemination amongst the natives of articles of this character could not be allowed without danger to individuals and to the interests of Government. The Advocate-General was consulted. He advised that in his opinion there was an offence under Sec. 124 A. of the Penal Code, but 'a conviction will depend so much on the tribunal charged with the trial of the case and the view which the presiding judge may take of a law not yet judicially interpreted, that I feel myself unable to predict the result of a trial.'

On the strength of this the Government of Lord Northbrook replied to the Secretary of State that in the present state of law it was not desirable for the Government to prosecute except in the case of systematic attempts to excite hostility against the Government.

It was left to Lord Lytton's Government to deal with this difficult question, and it was not till September 1877 that Lord Lytton himself took it in hand.

Lord Lytton takes up the subject, September 1877

As an illustration of Lord Lytton's methods it is worth while to trace the steps by which he reached and gave effect to his final decision.

First in 1876 he had an historical note prepared

in the Secretariat, the writer of which indicated the Irish Act[1] as a possible guide. This Act allows the executive authority, after warning given, to confiscate the plant &c. of the offending paper, but it allows the proprietor to sue for damages if he can show that his publication was not seditious. The question was reviewed by the then legal member of Council, who, partly on the ground that the English press in India was as violent as the vernacular press, and partly on general grounds of the value of a free press, advised against any action being taken. So for a year more things remained as they were. In the autumn of 1877, when Lord Lytton was planning his famine inspection journey to Southern India, Mr. Eden, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, dealt with the subject in a speech and subsequently wrote to the Viceroy strongly urging legislation. Lord Lytton prepared a Minute giving the recent history of the matter, dwelling upon the obvious futility of the existing control by registration, showing what was thought by experienced officers on the danger of the spread of sedition, but dwelling not less strongly upon the injury done by the use which the press made of its power to intimidate native officers, and to blackmail native chiefs.

**Lord Lytton takes up the subject, September, 1877**

This Minute, together with an appendix containing the sample extracts from the Bengali vernacular press which Mr. Eden had sent up, was forwarded for the consideration of the members of the Council and of each Local Government and Chief Commissioner.

The result was to show that every member of the Council, and, with the single exception of Madras, every one of the ten different Local Governments and administrations consulted, was in favour of the principle of taking legislative action. The prepon-

[1] 33 & 34 Vict. c. 9 s. 30.

derance of opinion was in favour of preventive rather than remedial action. No great desire was shown to amend Sec. 124 A. about which discussion had in the first instance principally turned, but official opinion looked to warnings and confiscation on lines similar to the Irish Act, and in a minor degree to the effect of demanding security, as likely to be effective; but it was pointed out that the demand for security would at once put a stop to a large proportion of the ephemeral journals started without capital, edited by boys, and printed on credit. It was on the receipt of these opinions that Lord Lytton decided to act.

The Bill being prepared and approved by his colleagues, Lord Lytton telegraphed to the Secretary of State for permission to introduce it. The introductory part of the telegram ran thus:—

Lord Lytton's telegram to the Secretary of State

'The increasing seditious violence of the native press, now directly provocative to rebellion, has been for some time pressed on our attention by the Local Governments, who, except Madras, which has no vernacular press of any importance, all concur as to necessity of early and stringent legislation. This is also the unanimous opinion of Council. We have for some months been contemplating repressive action, but, in opinion of my own and the other Goverments, the language of the vernacular press, at all times mischievous, is specially dangerous now, when native community believes our power seriously weakened by events elsewhere. It is thus essentially necessary for Government in interest of public safety to take early steps for checking spread of seditious writing. While need for legislation is urgent owing to feeling of native community, opportunity is also peculiarly favourable owing to feeling of European community;

Lord Lytton's telegram to the Secretary of State

generally felt that seditious efforts of vernacular press, if not promptly repressed, will, under peculiar circumstances of present time, continue rapidly to increase. But if legislation did not take place immediately it would not be carried out this year; for, although Government will not break up so soon, I myself am obliged to leave Calcutta on 18th March, and we could not legislate on such a matter at Simla. We have accordingly prepared a Bill, and I propose to pass it at a single sitting on the plea of urgency, which is not fictitious, afterwards reporting to you our proceedings in detail.

'If measure becomes an accomplished fact, declared by us urgently necessary in interests of public safety, it will probably be accepted with far less objection than if it had formed subject of previous discussion.'

As the telegram gives in brief form the substance of the Act as it was finally passed, it may be as well to explain its provisions here by a further extract from this telegraphic despatch:—

'Our Bill is restricted in its operation to publications in Oriental languages; its chief provisions will take effect only in those parts of British India to which they may be specially extended by the Governor-General in Council, and will cease to have effect in those parts whenever the Governor-General in Council so directs. Its object is preventive rather than punitive. The system of check it establishes in the case of newspapers in Oriental languages published in British India is as follows:—

'*First.*—The magistrate may, with the previous sanction of the Local Government, require the printer or publisher of any such newspaper to enter into a bond, binding himself not to print or publish in such

Lord Lytton's telegram to the Secretary of State

newspaper anything likely to excite feelings of dissatisfaction to the Government, or antipathy between persons of different races, castes, religions, or sects, and not to use such paper for purposes of extortion. The magistrate may further require the amount of this bond to be deposited in money or securities.

'*Second.*—If any newspaper, whether a bond has been taken in respect of it or not, at any time contains any matter of the description just mentioned, or is used for purposes of extortion, the Local Government may warn such newspaper by a notification in the "Gazette," and if, in spite of such warning, the offence is repeated, the Local Government may then issue its warrant to seize the plant &c. of such newspaper, and when any deposit has been made may declare such deposit forfeited.

'*Third.*—As the provisions regarding the deposit of security and the forfeiture of the deposit would perhaps be found to press unduly on some of the less wealthy newspaper proprietors, clauses have been inserted enabling the publisher of a newspaper to take his paper out of the operation of this portion of the Act, for such time as he pleases, by undertaking to submit his proofs to an officer appointed by the Government before publication, and to publish nothing which such officer objects to. Any publisher may, if he chooses, do this at the time when he is called upon to deposit security, and, if he does so, no security can be demanded from him. Again, if he does not choose to avail himself of this provision at that stage, he may subsequently, in the event of a warning being issued against him, offer such an undertaking, and if the magistrate accepts it the proceedings are at an end.

'An appeal is given to the Governor-General in

Council against anything done by a Local Government or any inferior authority.

Lord Lytton's telegram to the Secretary of State

'Declarations of forfeitures and other proceedings under the Act are made final and conclusive, subject only to such appeal.

'This procedure seems to us the most suitable, as it precludes the publicity and *éclat* which would attach to a trial in a court of justice.

'We trust this will meet with your Lordship's approval.'

The permission thus asked for was readily accorded by Lord Salisbury subject to observations on details when the text should be received.

The Bill was introduced into Council by Sir A. Arbuthnot, was passed and became Law as Act IX. of '78 on the 14th of March 1878.

Act passed, March 14, 1878

Nine members of the Legislative Council spoke on the Bill, and among those nine were all the non-official members and the only native member of the Council then present. All spoke in favour of the Bill, which they said was necessary, though all regretted the necessity for such a law in a British dependency. Lord Lytton abstained from speaking till the debate had run its course—the singular but officially-prescribed course which involves, after the mover has spoken, a succession of speeches, proceeding in regular order, round the table, commencing from the junior member, who sits on the Viceroy's left, and following in the order of seniority up to the Lieutenant-Governor, who has his seat on the Viceroy's right. Finally the Viceroy as President sums up the debate, if he has anything to say upon it. On this occasion Lord Lytton had a good deal to say :—

'I cannot but regret the necessity which, by some irony of fate, has imposed on me the duty of under-

Lord Lytton's speech in Council, March 14, 1878

taking legislation for the purpose of putting restrictions on a portion of the press of this country. By association, by temperament, by conviction, I should naturally find my place on the side of those to whom the free utterance of thought and opinion is an inherited instinct and a national birthright. I should have rejoiced had it fallen to my lot to be able to enlarge, rather than restrict, the liberty of the press in India; for neither the existence nor the freedom of the press in this country is of native origin or growth. It is an exotic which especially claims and needs, from the hands that planted it in a foreign soil and clime, protecting shelter and fostering care. It is one of the many peculiarly British institutions which British rule has bestowed upon a population to whom it was previously unknown, in the belief that it will eventually prove beneficial to the people of India, by gradually developing in their character those qualities which have rendered it beneficial to our own countrymen. For this reason the British rulers of India have always, and rightly, regarded with exceptional tolerance the occasional misuse of an instrument confided to unpractised hands. But all the more is it incumbent on the Government of India to take due care that the gift for which it is responsible shall not become a curse instead of a blessing, a stone instead of bread, to its recipients.

'Under a deep sense of this great responsibility, I say distinctly, and without hesitation, that in my deliberate and sincere conviction, the present measure is imperatively called for by that supreme law—the safety of the State.

'We have endeavoured to base our rule in India on justice, uprightness, progressive enlightenment, and good government, as these are understood in England;

and it is at least a plausible postulate, which at first sight appears to be a sound one, that, so long as these are the characteristics of our rule, we need fear no disaffection on the part of the masses.

Lord Lytton's speech in Council, March 14, 1878

'It must, however, be remembered that the problem undertaken by the British rulers of India (a political problem more perplexing in its conditions and, as regards the results of its solution, more far-reaching than any which, since the dissolution of the Pax Romana, has been undertaken by a conquering race) is the application of the most refined principles of European government, and some of the most artificial institutions of European society, to a vast Oriental population, in whose history, habits and traditions they have had no previous existence. Such phrases as "Religious toleration," "Liberty of the press," "Personal freedom of the subject," "Social supremacy of the Law," and others, which in England have long been the mere catchwords of ideas common to the whole race, and deeply impressed upon its character by all the events of its history, and all the most cherished recollections of its earlier life, are here in India, to the vast mass of our native subjects, the mysterious formulas of a foreign, and more or less uncongenial, system of administration, which is scarcely, if at all, intelligible to the greater number of those for whose benefit it is maintained. It is a fact which, when I first came to India, was strongly impressed on my attention by one of India's wisest and most thoughtful administrators; it is a fact which there is no disguising; and it is also one which cannot be too constantly or too anxiously recognised, that by enforcing these principles, and establishing these institutions, we have placed, and must permanently maintain ourselves at the head of a gradual

Lord Lytton's speech in Council, March 14, 1878

but gigantic revolution—the greatest and most momentous social, moral, and religious, as well as political, revolution which, perhaps, the world has ever witnessed. Now, if the public interpreters and critics of our action were only European journalists, capable of understanding and criticising it from a European point of view, in reference to the known principles of European polity, and in accordance with the commonly accepted rules of European reasoning, then, I think, we might rationally anticipate nothing but ultimate advantage to the country, as well as to its Government, from the unrestricted expression of their opinion, however severely they might criticise, from time to time, this or that particular detail in the action of this or that particular administration. But this is not the case as regards those journals which are published in the vernacular languages. Written, for the most part, by persons very imperfectly educated, and altogether inexperienced; written, moreover, down to the level of the lowest intelligence, and with an undisguised appeal to the most disloyal sentiments and mischievous passions—these journals are read only, or chiefly, by persons still more ignorant, still more uneducated, still more inexperienced than the writers of them; persons wholly unable to judge for themselves, and entirely dependent for their interpretation of our action upon these self-constituted and incompetent teachers. Not content with misrepresenting the Government and maligning the character of the ruling race in every possible way and on every possible occasion, these mischievous scribblers have of late been preaching open sedition; and, as shown by some of the passages which have to-day been quoted from their publications, they have begun to

inculcate combination on the part of the native subjects of the Empress of India for the avowed purpose of putting an end to the British Ráj. This is no exaggeration. I have here under my hand a mass of such poisonous matter, extracted from the various organs of the vernacular press.'

Lord Lytton's speech in Council, March 14, 1878

Lord Lytton then went on to comment on various extracts, but it is noticeable that, unlike former speakers, who had laid stress mainly on those extracts which in their virulent abuse gave expression to the race hatred against Europeans as a whole, the Viceroy made almost exclusive use of those extracts which deal with the English as afraid of Russia, as defeated without a fight by Russia, as rapidly to be driven out of India by Russia. The selection of these extracts indicates that danger to the Empire was the dominant thought in his mind; it was on this that he insisted as the justification for his method of passing this law with less than the usual formalities; the danger he had in view was the diffusion of the idea that England was an effete power unable to stand before Russia, and destined to see her power in India crumble to pieces at the first contact with the enemy. It will be remembered that these months were a critical period as to the peace of Europe, and the progress of the Russo-Turkish war had been carefully watched in India. Lord Lytton, writing about this time elsewhere, remarked 'Hindus and Mohammedans alike have from the first instinctively regarded the Ottoman Empire as a counter in a great game for power in which both England and Russia had a tremendous stake to win or lose. They universally believe that Russia has won her stake and that we have lost ours. Already their imagination associates her image with the future of their own

Lord Lytton's speech in Council, March 14, 1878

destinies &c.' All this may have been an exaggerated view of native feeling, but it explains the urgency which he felt in regard to the passing of the Act, and the importance which he attached in the circumstances of the moment to the danger of allowing this particular seed to be sown all over India.

He went on in his speech to dwell on the justification for interference and the expediency of preventing rather than punishing.

'It is not in the spirit of resentment for injuries that we propose to legislate. It is in the firm conviction that the maintenance of our Ráj is for the good of the people, that we seek to save the people from the ruin in which they would involve themselves by seditious agitations against it. We have no desire to resort to fine or imprisonment; but what we do desire, and what we regard as the plain duty of the Government, is to prevent the open preaching of sedition and rebellion amongst the most ignorant, excitable, and helpless portion of its subjects.

'Within the last few weeks I have refused applications from two different Local Governments to permit the prosecution of local vernacular newspapers for obvious and rank sedition; and I will state my reasons for so doing. The law, as explained by the honourable mover of this Bill, is in its present state a very questionable instrument. The explanation of "disaffection" may be taken to explain away almost any incitement to disaffection that is not followed by actual rebellion; so that the probability of securing a conviction would always be doubtful. But, though these considerations might well justify me in hesitating to sanction a prosecution under existing circumstances, it was not solely, nor indeed mainly, on these considerations that I have acted. Had the law been

certain, and the temper of the jury such as would have rendered a conviction secure, still I should not have considered a prosecution desirable. What I desire is to prevent, not to punish, seditious appeals. A successful prosecution, even should it in some cases have a deterrent effect, would still invest the prosecuted journal with a mischievous notoriety, and an artificial importance, calculated to give to its seditious teaching the very publicity which, in the interests of good government, we should desire to prevent. Every such victory would be a virtual defeat.

Lord Lytton's speech in Council, March 14, 1878

'It is for these reasons that I came to the conclusion that legislation was necessary, and that it behoved us to direct such legislation to methods of prevention rather than of punishment. This conclusion has been adopted, after the most anxious consideration, with the unanimous approval of every member of my Executive Council, and every Local Government in India except one, within whose jurisdiction the vernacular press is wholly insignificant and unheeded.

'It may, and by some persons it probably will, be regarded as an objection to this measure that it draws a distinction, and apparently an invidious distinction, between the native and the English press. It may be said, with perfect truth, that the very words which we regard as innocuous in an English paper will be deemed seditious in a vernacular journal, and that the native editor may be ruined for repeating what the English editor has published with impunity. Well, this seems a very strong indictment against the Bill; but the briefest examination of the circumstances for which we are legislating will suffice to dissipate the force of it. In the first place, let the real distinction be observed. The distinction is not

Lord Lytton's speech in Council, March 14, 1878

between Englishmen and natives, or between the English press and the native press; for many natives publish the newspapers in English, and in very good English too. Some of the native newspapers thus published contain excellent and valuable comments on public affairs. Some of them are also edited by men of acknowledged ability and culture, who certainly do not hesitate to criticise the English Government with an asperity and hostility which no other foreign Government in the world would tolerate for a moment. With these papers we do not interfere. Being written in English, they are *ex vi termini* addressed to a more or less educated audience, and a class that has at least the power, even if it has not always the will, to choose between the false and the true, between the evil and the good. From them we apprehend no political danger; and we can trust to their improving education, as time goes on, to render their criticism fairer, and their judgment more according to knowledge. It is not, then, against native papers, as such, that our legislation is directed. We confine our measures of restriction purely to the papers written in vernacular languages; and we do so because, as I have said before, they are addressed solely to an ignorant, excitable, helpless class—a class whose members have no other means of information, no other guide as to the action and motives of their rulers; and who, if such action and motives be persistently misrepresented to them, are likely to give vent to their excited feelings in acts of disaffection, which cannot but be fraught with disaster to themselves.'

The rest of the speech dealt with the abuses incident to the vernacular press as a weapon of extortion and intimidation, to Indian chiefs and native officials—an

aspect of the question which clearly appealed with much force to his sympathy, and he wound up in the following words:—

Lord Lytton's speech in Council, March 14, 1878

'We must of course expect that by those people whose minds are governed by phrases, and who look upon the liberty of the press as a fetish to be worshipped, rather than as a privilege to be worthily earned and rationally enjoyed, this measure will be received with dislike, and the authors of it assailed with obloquy. It is my hope, however, that the gradual spread of education and enlightenment in India may ensure and expedite the arrival of a time when the restrictions we are now imposing can with safety be removed. I am unwilling to hamper the free influence of honest thought; but I recognise in the present circumstances of this country, and the present condition of the populations committed to our charge, a clear and obvious duty to check the propagation of sedition and prevent ignorant, foolish, and irresponsible persons from recklessly destroying the noble edifice which still generously shelters even its vilest detractors. That edifice has been slowly reared by the genius of British statesmanship out of the achievements of British valour. It was founded by English enterprise; it has been cemented by English blood; it is adorned with the brightest memorials of English character. The safe preservation of this great Imperial heirloom is the first and highest duty of those to whose charge it is entrusted —a duty owed to the memory of our fathers, as well as to the interests of our children; to the honour of our Sovereign, no less than to the welfare of all her subjects in India.'

The results of this measure and its subsequent fate may now be told.

Result of Measure

First, it had to run the gauntlet of the Secretary of State and his Council. The Secretary of State who had approved its introduction and, indeed, the method of dealing with it, was Lord Salisbury, but the Secretary of State who had to consider it after it was passed was Lord Cranbrook.

On May 31, 1878 Lord Cranbrook addressed a long despatch to the Government of India reviewing the history of the Act, sharing the regret expressed by the Viceroy and his Council at having to fetter the press, but, having regard to the overwhelming weight of authority in favour of it in India, and to the soundness and sufficiency of the reasons put forth in support of such an Act, he could not but leave it to its operation. One section of the Act, that which allowed editors to contract themselves out of the security clause by consenting to come under a censorship, was objected to, and the Viceroy was further advised that the Act should be executed in accordance with the spirit of the explanation attached to Sect. 124 A. of the Penal Code, to the effect that 'no criticism of Government or its measures should be discouraged if there is reason to think that it has been dictated by an honest desire for improvement,' rather than with the object of spreading disaffection, and he wound up with a hope that the vernacular newspapers might so improve that 'special legislation for any class of publication' might be found in no long time to be unnecessary. This acceptance of Lord Lytton's work was not, however, arrived at by a unanimous council. Three members of the Secretary of State's Council recorded minutes of dissent, viz. Sir William Muir, Sir Erskine Parry, and Colonel Yule. The dissents traversed the necessity for any repressive legislation, attributed the unanimous

approval on the part of the Indian authorities to their own over-sensitiveness to attack, fastened on the distinction between the English and the vernacular press as an unpardonable flaw, objected strongly to the hurried manner in which the Bill had been passed into law, and most of all to the fact that the Secretary of State's Council had had no opportunity previously of considering the proposals. The voting, however, was 3 against, and 10 for the measure; giving a majority of 7, so the Act was left to its operation. Its existence, however, was still threatened. In July 1878 Mr. Gladstone introduced into the House of Commons a motion which in its terms was singularly mild. It proposed that Her Majesty should 'give directions that all proceedings which may be taken by the authorities under the Indian Vernacular Press Act be reported to the Secretary of State and laid before Parliament from time to time.'

This resolution, which the Government did not think fit to accept (and though harmless in itself it might have afforded an awkward precedent), led to a debate in which, as was natural, the action of the Government of India was unsparingly censured by the opposition on the same grounds as those enumerated in the dissents above mentioned. Indeed, these dissents and the minutes of 1835, when Sir Charles Metcalfe freed the press from its previous disabilities, were the great armoury from which the weapons of attack were borrowed. The outcome of the debate was a majority of 56 against Mr. Gladstone's resolution.

It has been mentioned above that the Secretary of State objected to so much of the Act as allowed the editor of a vernacular paper to avoid the necessity of providing security by submitting to a censorship. The ground of objection taken was that,

Result of Measure

looking to the variety of dialects the censors would have to be natives of India, and that the censors would in fact have to write the newspaper. To give effect to this decision of the Secretary of State a fresh Bill was introduced in September. The opportunity was then taken of reviewing the operation of the Act during the seven months of its existence and of replying to some of the strictures passed upon it in the Secretary of State's Council and the Parliament. The main point brought out by the speakers was that the Act had really proved itself preventive and not punitive; that during the seven months of its existence there had been no necessity to put it into force; that the criticism on particular measures such as the license tax and the Arms Act, remained as vigorous as ever, but the preaching of general sedition had ceased. Lord Lytton in his remarks explained the attitude which he desired to adopt no less to the vernacular than to the European press in India, to the effect that the Government should in a country where there was no authentic source of political information other than the Government, 'keep the press fully and impartially furnished with accurate current information in reference to such measures or intentions on the part of the Government as are susceptible of immediate publication without injury to the interests for which the Government is responsible.'

Bureau of Press Commissioner established

It was to give effect to these proposals that Lord Lytton established the bureau of a Press Commissioner, an arrangement which might have succeeded in improving the relations of Government with the vernacular press, but which was not continued under succeeding Viceroys.

The Act of 1878 itself had but a brief life of less than four years. Up to the time when Lord Lytton

left in 1880, only on one occasion had the Act been resorted to. In March 1879 the 'Som Prakásh,' a Bengali journal, published a seditious article which attracted the attention of the Government of India and the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. Sir A. Eden was directed to apply the Act. The publisher of the 'Som Prakásh' was called upon to give security that he would not again publish seditious writings. He gave the bond, but he closed his paper. In the following year he applied for permission to re-issue his paper without security, and undertook to be more careful in future. On the recommendation of Sir A. Eden this permission was given and the bond was withdrawn.

On December 7th, 1881, under Lord Ripon's Government a Bill was introduced to repeal Act IX. of 1878 together with its amending Act XVI. of the same year. The introducer, Mr. Gibbs, gave as the reason for repealing the legislation that since its passing it had never been fully put into operation against any vernacular publication in British India, and that there was not at that time existing a state of circumstances sufficiently serious to justify the law being 'placed in full operation.' So far as vernacular publications in British India were concerned the Government proposed to rely on the sections of the Penal Code dealing with the subject; and with regard to the introduction of seditious matter from abroad, their reliance would be placed on the Customs Act and the Post Office Act, which gave power to prevent the entry of objectionable publications issued in foreign countries. The Bill was passed into law with very few comments on January 19, 1882.

From that time the vernacular press had a free

hand unchecked save by the uncertainty whether Sec. 124 A. might not be applied to their writings, and the various Local Governments watched the increasing venom and audacity of the press with profound anxiety, but with equal uncertainty as to whether Sec. 124 A. could be relied on. In Bengal an attempt was made in 1892 to prosecute the 'Bangobáshi,' a Calcutta newspaper, and the Chief Justice in his summing up interpreted the section in a manner favourable to the prosecution, but the jury disagreed, the judge did not express his agreement with the verdict of the majority, and the prosecution fell through. Not till the murders of Messrs. Rand and Ayerst at Poona in 1897, murders which the Government attributed to the violent inflammatory articles of the vernacular press, was the subject again seriously dealt with. It was felt by the Government that after the disastrous reversal of Lord Lytton's endeavour to grapple with the evil, it would be necessary to avoid if possible the two stumbling blocks of offence which caused the failure of his labours. The High Court of Bombay, equally with that of Calcutta (and supported on appeal by the Privy Council), had by their interpretation of the explanation to Sec. 124 A. shown that, though clumsily worded, it was in substance a sufficiently punitive weapon. The Government of India writing in these circumstances in 1897 proposed, therefore, while maintaining in substance the old punitive section, to make no distinction between the English and the vernacular press, and to leave all action to be taken through the Courts in the ordinary course of law. After some correspondence with the Secretary of State, and much discussion in the legislature, the law has now been strengthened in the following

manner. The wording of the old Sec. 124 A. has been made so clear as to leave no room for doubt, and disaffection towards Her Majesty has become equally punishable with disaffection towards Her Majesty's Government. A new clause has been added making punishable the attempt to promote feelings of hatred or enmity between different classes of Her Majesty's subjects, and the law which deals with the circulation of rumours with the intention of causing mutiny or rioting, or of disturbing public tranquillity, has been amplified; moreover, a new power has been given to superior magistrates to take security from any person circulating seditious matter or matter likely to promote enmity between classes, or intended to intimidate or defame public officers, and in case the security is not given to commit to prison for a year.

Lastly, cases of seditious publication can now be prosecuted in the court of the superior magistrates instead of having to be committed to the Sessions where, as a set-off to the risk of heavier punishment there is the certainty of the higher *éclat*, greater publicity, and a more notable advertisement.

It is at least permissible to doubt whether Lord Lytton's method of dealing with the vernacular press would not have been found in practice a lighter and less galling yoke than that to which after the lapse of fifteen years it has been found necessary to subject it.

# CHAPTER XII

## INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE

In order that the following account of Lord Lytton's efforts to solve the problem of a native civil service may be made intelligible to the English reader, it will be well in a few preliminary words to explain the lines on which the civil administration was organised. For present purposes this may be taken as divided into two main branches, the executive and judicial.[1] The executive branch covers such functions as the supervision of the police, the work of the magistrates, the collection of revenue, the assessment and settlement of land. The judicial branch (which in all the older provinces is separate from the executive) deals with the trial of all civil cases and of the more serious criminal offences, and the work is carried on by a hierarchy of judicial officers, culminating in the High Courts of Justice. In both branches the superior posts, administrative or appellate, are manned almost exclusively by Europeans, and (save as to a proportion of seats in the High Court) are reserved by statute for members of what was

[1] There are a multitude of other special departments, Public Works, Education, Police, Opium, Forests, &c., in regard to which the same essential problem of admitting natives to the higher ranks has long engaged attention, and was to some extent dealt with in Lord Lytton's time. But these departments were outside the scope of the special administrative difficulty in regard to appointments belonging to the covenanted civil service to which Lord Lytton's efforts were mainly directed, and are not consequently discussed in this chapter.

called the covenanted civil service. In practice this meant that while the district officer and all above him, with perhaps two or three officers below him in the executive line, would be covenanted civilians, the great bulk of the magisterial and revenue work lay in the hands of what was known as the uncovenanted service, consisting mainly of educated natives, with a small sprinkling of Europeans and Eurasians, earning salaries ranging from 200 Rs. to 800 Rs. per mensem, and numerous in the proportion of perhaps six uncovenanted to one covenanted civilian. Similarly in the judicial branch the district judge was by law a covenanted civilian, but his was almost exclusively the supervising work of an appellate court and a court of sessions; the great bulk of the civil causes of the district would be tried by his native subordinate judges, or munsiffs, whose salaries ranged very much between the same limits as those of the executive service, and the numerical proportions of the superior and subordinate services respectively did not greatly vary in the two branches. The problem which Lord Lytton had to solve was how to secure for the natives of India a proportion of the higher appointments exclusively reserved for the covenanted civil service. This service is recruited by competition, and any British subject, including, of course, natives of India, may compete. As a matter of fact, natives of India have been in the habit of competing, and a certain proportion have been successful.[1] But the fact that the examination was held in London, and held, moreover, on lines specially designed to test the results of English school or

[1] The last civil list shows some thirty-three natives of India in the covenanted civil service, and about forty-five so-called statutory civilians.

college education, was held to handicap Indian competitors too severely, and another open door was required. Two legislative enactments had been designed at different times to deal with this question. The first was the Act of William IV., which merely amounted to a pious opinion that birth or colour did not disqualify anyone from holding any appointment, but left the question for practical purposes very much where it was; the other was adopted nearly forty years later, and was aimed by the Duke of Argyll directly at the legal difficulty involved by the statutory reservation of the appointments in question to the covenanted civil service. The matter had been urged on Lord Lawrence's attention as far back as 1867, but with little practical result. Lord Mayo took it up, but pointed out the necessity of legislation to remove the legal obstacles, and in 1870 the Duke of Argyll accordingly introduced and passed an Act (33 Vict. c. 3), by which the Indian authorities are enabled, notwithstanding any previous law, to appoint natives of India to any office in the civil service, but subject always to such rules as might from time to time be prescribed by the Governor-General in Council, and sanctioned by the Secretary of State. 'Subject always to such rules.' The Act would not work without the rules, and it was for the Government of India to make the rules. The Secretary of State waited meekly for two years, and then ventured to inquire if any rules had been passed. In October 1872 he wrote again more urgently, suggesting that the rules should fix a definite proportion of appointments to be given to natives of India, that these should be mainly judicial rather than executive posts, the Indian mental character adapting itself better to the former than to the latter duties, and finally that

the salary should be less in the case of Indians so appointed than in the case of covenanted civilians, on the ground that though the duties were the same, yet that men working in their own country and among their own surroundings did not require the same high salaries as were needed to induce first-class men to adopt a life of exile in the tropics.

Rules were accordingly passed in 1873, but these rules, being based on the assumption that 'proved merit and ability' would best, if not exclusively, be shown by previous service in subordinate offices, were disallowed. The law officers had advised that merit and ability need only be proved or established to the satisfaction of the authorities making the appointment, and no particular method of establishing proof is enjoined. To limit discretion by requiring previous service under Government was opposed to the spirit of the Act. So at the end of five years things remained where they were when the law was passed in 1870.

Lord Northbrook, however, in 1875 drew up rules in wide terms, making no restrictions save that the nominee was to be appointed provisionally and to undergo a term of probation. These rules, however, which were enabling rather than enacting rules, remained practically inoperative, only one or at the most two appointments having been made thereunder until Lord Lytton's Government reopened the subject in 1878. Lord Lytton had indeed personally set the ball rolling a year previously in an elaborate Note dated May 30, 1877. He had perceived that though the legal claims of the covenanted civil service no longer interfered with the freer employment of natives, their moral claims remained where they were. These men had through the door

of competitive examination entered a close service, which was their profession for life. They had reason to expect a certain definite rate of promotion to increased salaries and higher position. Every native that was appointed under the law of 1870 would *pro tanto* diminish those prospects, and disappoint reasonable expectations. To reconcile these conflicting claims was still a problem which had to be solved, and the first step towards solving it was taken in the exhaustive Note above mentioned. In that Note the Viceroy explained the position in which his Government was placed between the pressure of two antagonistic responsibilities. On the one hand, the pledges implied in the action of Parliament, and the hopes and expectations which have grown out of them in the native mind; on the other hand, the imperial necessity of maintaining the safety and welfare of the Empire by restricting the most important executive posts to Europeans, and the undoubted claims of the existing covenanted service to a maintenance of the reasonable expectations and prospects under which they were induced to compete for entry into that service.

The overpowering necessity of more largely employing native agency in the civil administration was justified in the Note, apart from the question of pledges, by the political advantage of associating the subject races in the government of the country, and by the financial duty of employing the cheapest agency available.

The solution to which Lord Lytton pointed in the Note was to be found in the reduction for the future of the number of admissions to the covenanted civil service, and in the establishment of a *close* native civil service which should have a monopoly of the

appointments removed from the list of those hitherto reserved to the covenanted service, together with a portion of those now held by the uncovenanted service. It proposed that appointments should be made not by competition but by nomination, and that the new service should be remunerated on rates of pay less than those of the covenanted service, but should be equal to it in status and position.

Lord Lytton in this Note acknowledged his indebtedness to Mr. Eden for his forcible contributions to the discussion. It was his view that the covenanted civil service should be strictly a *corps d'élite*, and should be confined to those appointments which could not safely be entrusted to natives, and from this he argued that the solution of the problem was to be found in the direction of reducing the recruitment for the covenanted civil service *pari passu* with the substitution of a native civil service. This idea Lord Lytton expanded and worked out in his exhaustive Note. He dwelt with much insistence on the necessity of making the new native service a *close* one which should have the practical monopoly of the appointments allotted to it, and in which nominees should enter at the bottom and work their way up through the grades; only in this way, he thought, could they receive adequate training, and their competence be secured. He threw out suggestions also that the entrance to this service should be through a special college, and that opportunity should also be taken of devising some scheme by which properly qualified natives of birth and position might enter the army on a level, more or less, with their English comrades. Neither of these suggestions has commanded practical acceptance: the former was negatived at the time on financial grounds; the latter has

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been found by successive military chiefs, even when good will has certainly not been wanting, to bristle with difficulties too numerous and too serious to be tackled without grave misgivings. At the same time the question is one which cannot be indefinitely left alone.

To revert to the history of the native civil service, Lord Lytton's Note, after being circulated and discussed by local Governments, councillors, and high officials generally, resulted in the scheme which was sent home a year later in the Government of India's despatch of May 2, 1878. This scheme was very much that foreshadowed in the Note. After justifying the expediency from a political point of view of associating with us in the work of government the more influential classes of natives, the despatch pointed out that it was essential that such men should be trained for the work from the beginning, and should find therein an influential and honourable career. All this led up to the necessity of making the native service a close one, and it was proposed to assign to it fifteen per cent. of covenanted and twenty per cent. of uncovenanted appointments. The candidates were to be nominated by the local governments, but appointed on probation by the Government of India. The new service was to be regarded as a branch of the covenanted civil service, no distinction being made in the duties or responsibilities of those particular posts which were to be open alike to both branches; and the status and position of the two branches, though not the pay, were to be the same. The despatch suggested that if this scheme were carried out it would be expedient to exclude natives of India from the competitive examination for the covenanted civil service in London; but this,

it was pointed out, would require legislation, and the Government of India did not insist on it as an essential part of their scheme. It was also pointed out that a close native civil service would conflict with the words of the Act of William IV. from one point of view, and from another with the scheduled list of the Act of 24 & 25 Vict., while it would also involve modification of the Act of 1870. The need for legislation was fatal to the scheme. The Secretary of State would not face it, even though Lord Lytton expressly recommended that the ugly part of the scheme (the proposal to exclude natives from the competitive examination for the civil service) should be dropped. In the correspondence which went on while the scheme was under the consideration of the Secretary of State, Lord Lytton, in a letter to Lord Cranbrook, wrote a full defence of it in July 1879. He says: 'Up to the present moment not a single effort has been made to modify the regulations which everybody perceives to be incompatible with the fulfilment of these promises.' He then shows that his scheme will not involve any financial responsibilities, and that there was no danger of alienating the existing class of native officials. 'Such a danger might be incurred if we offered this class, in exchange for all it now gets, something else and something different. But what we propose is to continue to it all it now gets, with the addition of a great deal more which it cannot now get. You ask me if I really think the difficulties of employing natives are at present such that a revolution is needed. . . . My reply to this question is that the present system has had an unlimited trial with increasingly unsatisfactory results, and that no one has yet been able to show any reason why it should succeed better in the future than it has

succeeded in the past. Under the present system we are practically bound by law and custom to appoint Europeans to all the higher posts. To appoint a native to any such post is an altogether exceptional act, for which we are obliged to show very special reasons or obtain special authority. What I say is—shift this condition, at least in regard to a certain number of high appointments which have been ascertained and are acknowledged *communi consensu* to be safely open to natives. The number of such posts must always be comparatively small, but it is sufficient for the fair discharge of our unredeemed pledges. In regard to these particular appointments, let the general rule be laid down that *prima facie* natives only are to hold them. In short, transpose the *onus probandi*, and we shall have obtained all that is necessary.' He goes on in his summing-up to say: 'The principal cause of the acknowledged failure to fulfil fairly the promises given lies in the vagueness of the promises themselves. . . . The result is that the pettiness of the prizes open to them, and the extreme uncertainty of their prospects in our service, prevent that service from offering any attraction to the class of natives whom we most desire to associate with it. Thus we remain in the vicious circle round which we have been wandering just half as long as the Hebrews wandered in the wilderness. We don't employ natives more largely because they are not well qualified; and they are not well qualified because we do not employ them enough. . . . I am myself convinced (and so far as I can judge this is also the conviction of all our best and most experienced local administrators), that there is only one safe practical issue from it. Define more clearly the promises

which have been given so vaguely and indeed so rashly. Cautiously circumscribe them, but then make them *realities* within their necessary limits. Don't hold out to the native vague hopes of filling every appointment now filled by Europeans, but give him that reasonable certainty to which he is entitled, of reaching a respectable position in the service you invite him to enter.'

Lord Cranbrook, while complimenting the Viceroy and the Government on their endeavours to deal with this question, declined to sanction anything which involved legislation, and thus extinguished the proposal for a close native civil service; he directed, however, that a smaller scheme should be drawn up, confined to appointing every year to the civil service of India any such number of natives as may be determined on, and proportionately decreasing the number of recruits for the covenanted civil service.

In May 1879 the amended rules were sent home with a despatch regretting that the scheme had been shorn of the features that seemed to make for permanence and stability, but explaining that the Government had done the best they could within the limitations laid down. The rules provided (1) that a proportion not exceeding one-fifth of the total number of civilians appointed by the Secretary of State to the civil service in any one year should be natives selected by the local Governments; that each selection should be subject to the approval of the Governor-General in Council, and that the selected candidates should ordinarily be on probation for two years. These rules were sanctioned by Lord Cranbrook in August 1879. They were followed up by a Government resolution, issued in December 1879, enjoining that appointments

under the rules should generally be confined to young men of good family and social position, possessed of fair abilities and education, to whom the offices open to them in the inferior ranks or uncovenanted service have not proved a sufficient inducement to come forward for employment. (2) That the appointment of persons already in the employment of Government should be exceptional. Thus was the Statutory service constituted, and though its success was incomplete owing partly to its not being a *service* at all, but a fortuitous concourse of atoms, selected by each local Government on different principles, the conditions of whose employment, moreover, were constantly being varied, yet during the eight years of its existence, the scheme did succeed in giving effect to Lord Lytton's main object. Under it during these eight years, *pari passu* with a constant decrease in the recruitment of the covenanted civil service in England, fifty-seven natives of India were appointed to posts ordinarily held by that service. An agitation sprang up against it in 1884, mainly on the ground that the young men of good family were either not forthcoming or not efficient, and looking to the traditional habits of the class and to the novelty of the experiment, which had not really had time to be fairly tested on the original lines, this deficiency was not to be wondered at. Local Governments were accordingly allowed to make their selections on other principles, and there was a tendency for the pendulum to swing in favour of competition as a substitute for nomination. The favoured position of 'Statutories' gave rise also to some grumbling in the subordinate native services, and after an ineffectual attempt to deal with the question on other lines by Lord Ripon's Government, the Public Service Commission appointed by Lord

Dufferin, under the presidency of Sir Charles Aitchison, ended by sweeping away the statutory service in favour of a 'provincial' service which in one point—that of occupying posts held both by the covenanted and uncovenanted branches—practically reverts to Lord Lytton's original plan.

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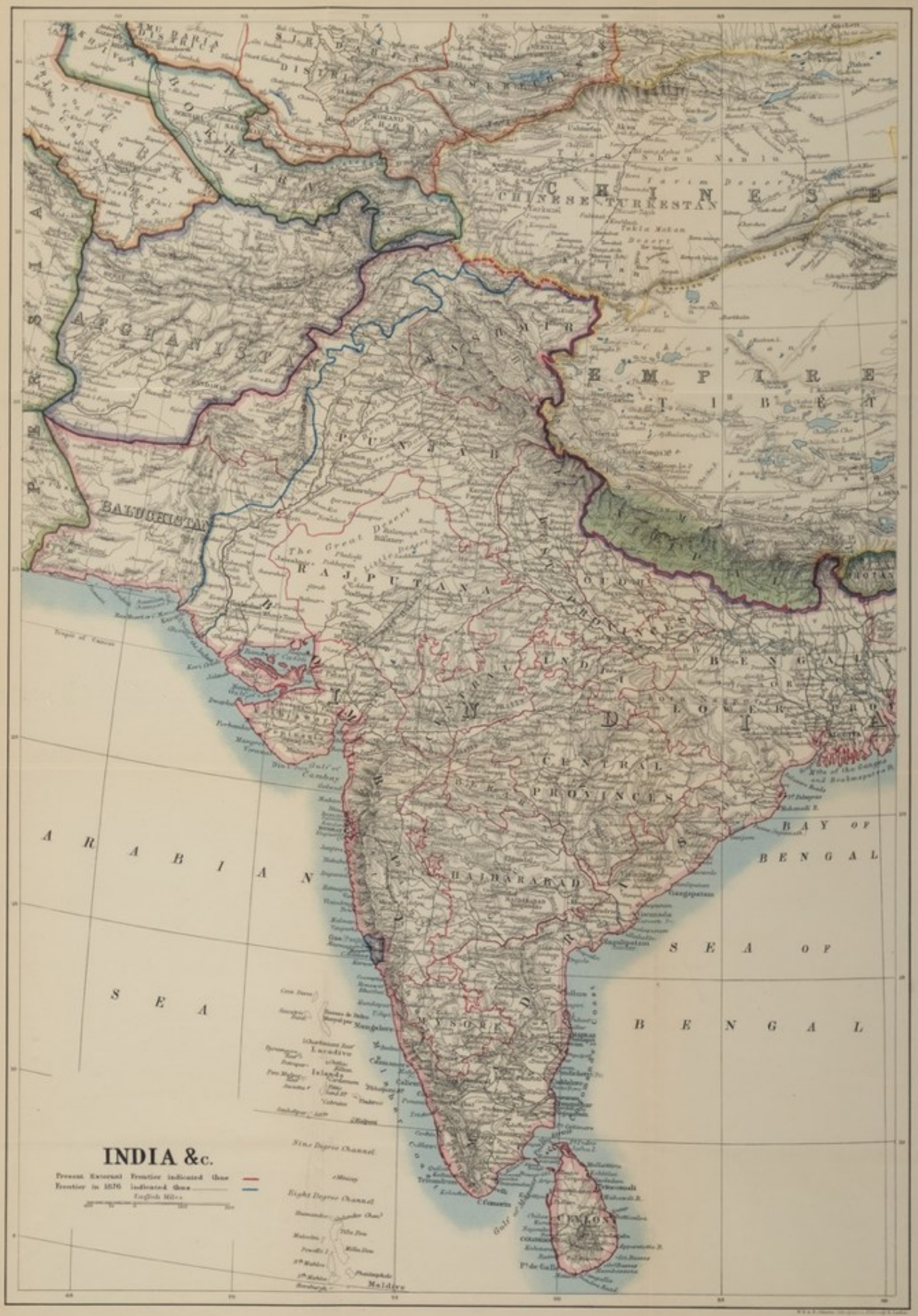
*Spottiswoode & Co. Printers, New-street Square, London.*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