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THE
RETENTION OF CANDAHAR.

BY
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SIND FRONTIER AND IN BELOOCHISTAN.

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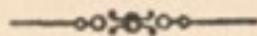
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THE
RETENTION OF CANDAHAR.



THE Government has at last, as was expected, declared its intention to evacuate Candahar, thus abandoning all the advantages towards the settlement of the vexed question of English and Russian supremacy in Central Asia that might have been obtained from the late campaign; and leaving to their successors the task of dealing with the difficulties inevitably attendant upon having immediately on our Indian frontier a disorganised, if not disintegrated State, to assist in the settlement of which there is a rival Power ready, willing, and indeed anxious to interfere.

influence created
✓ dis-organiza-
-tion &
caused
disintegration

I have never credited the Birmingham Caucus with the desire, or even with the political sagacity to understand the reasoning of Pitt, that empire alone can ensure permanent national greatness, and that as empire slips from the grasp of purely trading communities, such as Holland, they inevitably sink and become an object of ambition to those Powers which are still aggressive. I do, however, credit them with a sincere desire to maintain and develop to the utmost the industrial prosperity of their country.

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They will understand the selfish argument of increased trade, and may possibly support on that ground a policy in accordance with the abiding commercial interests of the empire, whose destinies they at present virtually sway.

I do not wish to go back to the mistakes of the past, and am ready to admit that if statesmen of either party had had the courage of their convictions, and had not been so submissive to popular clamour, or so dreaded the criticisms of their opponents, the present crisis might never have occurred. The decision to which we must now come, however, has nothing to do with the policy which led to the late war, but with its results. It is idle to speculate as to what might have been done prior to the reception by Shere Ali of the Russian mission, and his refusal of our own; or even at the time of the conclusion of the treaty of Gandamak, and during the period immediately succeeding it. Since then, even the semblance of a united Afghanistan has passed away, with little apparent prospect of its reconstruction. We have ourselves proclaimed the independence of Candahar; its ruler has abdicated; and we remain in possession. The question now therefore is, how can the best interests of its people, and the greatest security to our Indian dependency be obtained, by retaining Candahar, or by abandoning it, to become the prize, after protracted struggles, of the strongest of the contending native factions.

For greater convenience, the subject may be

considered under three heads, Military, Political, and Financial; and under all three I believe that the weight of argument and experienced opinion will be found in favour of retention.

MILITARY.

Even the present Government and their supporters admit that our influence must be paramount in the external relations of Afghanistan. We have seen the opposition that may be organised, and the intrigues that may be carried on beyond the mountain barrier that divides us from our unruly neighbours, and the situation in 1879 would have been much more serious if a small nucleus of Russian troops with artillery had been prepared to cross the Oxus into Badakshan in support of their now famous embassy. Such a contingency might easily have altered the result of Shirpur, and would at any rate have entailed upon us a struggle that must have tried to their utmost the resources of England.

The evidence of Sir F. Roberts upon this point is conclusive:—"The occupation of Cabul in 1879 revealed to us much valuable information concerning the offensive power which the Ameer possessed in his army, his well-stocked arsenal, and his skilful artisans. With such means at his disposal for good or evil, it is easy to foresee what serious complications might at any time have arisen were he assisted by Russia, either with men, money, or officers.

“This unmasking of the Ameer’s considerable warlike preparations, hitherto carefully concealed from us, is surely in itself a sufficient justification of the line of action taken by the Indian Government when it declared war against Afghanistan in 1878.”

It would therefore seem to anybody endowed with the least military instinct that a position of observation beyond that mountain barrier, which would at the same time flank any movement upon Cabul, or our own territory, is a necessity ; that it is, in fact, the only alternative to an Afghan Government, strong enough to be free from the influence of external intrigue, which we believe to be an impossibility. We may here again quote Sir F. Roberts, who only gave in his adhesion to the proposal of evacuating the positions obtained under the treaty of Gandamak on the ground of “the announced intention to maintain a British garrison permanently at Candahar,” endorsed by Sir D. Stewart in the following words : “I do not propose to enter into a detailed criticism of General Roberts’ paper, with the drift of which I heartily agree. We do not require any greater facilities for the invasion of Afghanistan than are secured to us by our position in the south (viz. Candahar), and our control of the Khyber in the north.”* We

* In the Blue Book just published, Afghanistan 1881, No. 2, there is a Memorandum by Sir D. Stewart, declaring in favour of withdrawal from Candahar. This is misleading, as will be seen by reference to dates. It is dated April 18, 1879, and was written in view of the position prior to the treaty of Gandamak. The one quoted above is dated July 2, 1880, and was written in view of the changed and existing circumstances.

add the 11th paragraph of Lord Ripon's despatch of the 14th of September, 1880 :—

“Our late colleague, Sir Edwin Johnson, who was a member of our Government when these arrangements were under discussion, wishes us to state that, while agreeing with the measures proposed, and thus consenting to give up the command over Cabul which the Khyber positions, in his opinion, possess, he considers that such a measure only renders it still more incumbent on us not to relax our hold on Candahar, nor to abandon the strategical advantages which he believes its occupation affords. He desires it, therefore, to be understood that any change in respect to our tenure of Candahar would materially alter the conditions of the discussion, and the state of affairs with which the present despatch deals, and that it would therefore set him free to reconsider altogether his opinion on the subject. Sir Edwin Johnson considers that this view is supported by the recorded opinion of Sir Frederick Roberts, which forms one of the enclosures to this despatch.”

Sir R. E. Egerton, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, writing upon Sir F. Roberts' Memorandum, says :—“I agree in all that General Roberts says regarding the importance of Candahar and the necessity for holding it.”

General Watson agrees for the most part in that distinguished officer's views, his dissents having nothing to do with the question of Candahar. The minute of the Commander-in-Chief, concurred

in by Mr. Stokes, member of the Viceroy's Council, we give *in extenso* :—

“I should with Sir F. Roberts wish to assert that my view of the propriety of the withdrawal from Cabul and from Gandamak is based on the supposition that Candahar will be held in force. This is the keystone of the whole military situation, as modified by our withdrawal from Cabul.

“To ensure an effective advance from the southward against an enemy in the interior of the country, as contemplated in this despatch, the retention of Candahar is a necessity. Further, it appears to me that to ensure the acquisition of some knowledge of the Ameer's foreign relations, over which we have so recently asserted some power of control, and to give us some real power of influencing them, we must hold Candahar.

“If we decide all the points alluded to in this despatch, without reference to Candahar, we may some day be told that, when we were engaged in the settlement of our relations with Afghanistan, there was no evidence of our having considered Candahar of any value.

(Signed) “F. P. HAINES.”

“I concur in the above minute.

(Signed) “W. STOKES.”

What we require for cheap administration in India, including economical and effective military control, is the complete isolation of that country from European politics, in order that its population should be impressed with the idea that India is the one portion of the empire at which no blow can be levelled, and that they consequently have nothing to hope from external sympathy and intrigue. It is not so much invasion we have to fear, but the existence of even a possible base for intrigue. We must realise that operations on our Indian frontier may not be occasioned by purely local troubles, but by complications in the politics of Europe, where we cannot hope, or even wish, that our interests should be identical with those of Russia. But by abandoning Candahar now, we give Russia the power of forcing our hand at any time which may best suit her interests. By a feint on the northern frontier of Afghanistan, she would oblige us to advance, thereby probably necessitating a large reinforcement of our troops in India at the very moment they are wanted in another field.

We know the strain that an attempted advance, under the most favourable circumstances, has been during a time of absolute peace in Europe; what then would such a movement entail upon us if an uneasy expectancy, or hope of change, was the spirit, not only of the disaffected, but of the majority of our Indian subjects?

If, on the other hand, we retain Candahar, we could afford to remain quiescent, being certain that Russia would not simply threaten advance, knowing it to be useless, and that an advance in force would be a costly and hazardous enterprise in the face of such a position as Candahar, connected as it would be with India by an effective railway. It could then only mean war with England, which Russia will always avoid while she can.

Thus India would be kept out of the field of European politics, and our Indian subjects generally would probably look upon a war with Russia, if we ever had to engage in one with her, as they would upon any other European convulsion—as something happening in almost another world, and having no personal interest for them.

An opinion is strongly held by some military authorities that the Pishin Valley would be preferable to Candahar, on the ground of economy. This view has been ably advanced lately in a lecture delivered before the East Indian Association; but we notice that the men who are supposed to support it have either never been within hundreds of miles of the locality, or have an experience of it which is superficial and of old date. They contend that half the force necessary for the retention of Candahar would suffice for the minor advance they advocate, and in the lecture above referred to, the actual numbers are given. Their argument, however, refutes itself. In the

first place, while stating that the valley of the Pishin is very fertile, which we admit, they say that it is limited in extent, but that the extra supplies could be brought in from the Candahar districts. Can we count upon this if we have no control there, and these districts are the theatre of native factional struggles? And can the smaller force they estimate be considered sufficient, when its first duty may be to advance upon Candahar? Is not the inference overwhelming that a force sufficient to take a place should be at least equal to that sufficient to hold it in garrison? We believe that such a proposition, if carried into effect, would necessitate a reserve division in Scinde, maintained entirely at the expense of Indian revenues; that the immediate expense of it, in fact, would be the same, not taking into consideration prospective necessities; and that it would leave us without any of the advantages of the alternative policy in security, assistance from the revenues of the new districts, and, indirectly, from the development of trade.

There is one other supposed military difficulty which is advanced in Lord Hartington's despatch of May 21st, viz. that of securing recruits for the native army for service beyond the frontier of India. We do not believe in the difficulty, and have no faith in the men who have propounded it. Lord Napier, of Magdala, than whom there can be no weightier authority as to the organisation of

our Indian army, and the feelings of the Sepoy, considers "that the same comparatively liberal payment that has filled the colonies of Great Britain and France with coolies, and has provided bodies of Sikh police for Shanghai and Singapore, will fill a Candahar corps d'armée. Let the soldiers be sufficiently paid for the hardships and dangers of exile in Afghanistan, and there will be no difficulty in filling the ranks." But even should this not be the case, we believe that we should increase our strength infinitely in this respect by retaining Candahar. We should open a new recruiting ground that would not only enable us to cope effectually with frontier exigencies, but make our position in India more secure, and render the Indian army in time really an Imperial force, for employment elsewhere than in India, should occasion require it. Our best Indian regiments at present are those which number among their men Afghans and Pathans.

POLITICAL.

As regards the political aspect of the question, there can, we think, be no doubt in the minds of those who have any knowledge of the subject, and who impartially consider it. We have, on our Indian frontier, a neutral zone of barbarism between two civilised states, advancing on it from the north and south.

It is certain that this zone must eventually be

civilised in the interest of one or the other of them, and it is equally certain that this result must be arrived at by the development of social and commercial intercourse. Is it wise, under such circumstances, to abandon a position which will help us materially to the command of both influences? A permanent garrison at Candahar would make thousands dependent upon us, and largely develop the place as a centre of trade, and consequent power. It is the mutual engagements of trade and material interests that bind peoples together, not subsidies to their rulers. Russia has shown her appreciation of this fact in the tenacity with which she has held and developed trade routes within her control, and her repeated attempts to destroy those beyond it. We need not go further than the Poti and Bayazid routes, as examples of this, although many instances might be adduced, the results of which are that not only are Russian manufacturers able to compete with those of England in the bazaars of Teheran and of Central Asia, but we find those manufactures exposed for sale at Shikarpoor on the Indus.

All agree that our influence must be paramount in Afghanistan, but it is hardly realised that the only means at our disposal to secure it is trade, and that trade means, in uncivilised countries, a basis for its development, securely held by British bayonets. This is no new theory. Lord Wellesley

said that the true empire of England was the empire of the commerce of the world; and he showed throughout his career (the greatest, we believe, of the century) how he would give effect to that axiom in the policy of his country.

FINANCIAL.

Financially, the question is even more serious. We need hardly recall late events, and the difficulties to which we are only too accustomed—deficits year by year, severely commented upon by alarmists, and explained away by those of Utopian ideas, the inelastic revenue of India, and other kindred circumstances, which it is not necessary to particularise. A happy medium between the views of the extreme pessimists and the optimists is probably the truth.

Indian finance is an anxious subject, and a diminution of military expenditure, if practicable, is advisable; at any rate, there should be no increase of it, if security can otherwise be obtained. How does this consideration affect the retention of Candahar?

To occupy Candahar, according to the best military authorities, a force of 13,000 men would be necessary, and the extra cost of this force is roundly estimated at 345,950l.* This, however, allows for a considerable extra expenditure for food and other supplies for camp followers, as well as troops, besides transport, whereas we believe that both

* See Appendix.

would be maintained at a less cost in those rich districts than in Scinde ; and in any case an equal force, as we have already shown, would be required somewhere on the frontier, if we are to maintain our supremacy, and be prepared for the eventualities that are only too likely to arise. On the other hand, we should have a revenue from the Candahar districts estimated in Sir D. Stewart's despatch of February 16th, 1880, at twenty and a half lacs of rupees, which he considered would be largely increased, by the construction of a railway from India and Kurrachee.

To hold Pishin and the Khojak, the expenditure would be the same, without the income to be derived from Candahar.

To retreat to Quettah and the Indus would be no present economy, whilst it would be necessary to calculate upon a large expenditure for advance, contingent upon European complications, besides the inevitable constant expenditure upon small expeditions to ensure or restore order among the frontier tribes. Under the two last alternatives, also, all idea of a railway to Candahar would have to be abandoned. It may be urged that this would be an economy, but experience in the East has proved that a railway is more effectual as a civiliser than a military or police force ; and the trade returns show that even at first it would be, if not a successful speculation, at any rate a not more extravagant scheme for ensuring order than many that have been tried by the Government of India.

GOVERNMENT ARGUMENTS FOR ABANDONMENT.

We need only further notice the views held by the present Government with reference to the question, the latest exposition of which is contained in the Duke of Argyle's speech of January 10, in answer to Lord Lytton, and in Lord Hartington's despatch of the 11th of November. The Duke admitted that the policy of all Viceroys, including Lord Lawrence, had been to exclude Russian influence from Afghanistan (which, by inference, he would lead us to believe had been successful until the time of Lord Lytton), and he attributed Shere Ali's late attitude to the threatening letters and Boycotting to which he was subjected by the late Viceroy. But this could not have affected Shere Ali's disposition towards the British Government during the Viceroyalty of Lord Northbrook, which was hostile, or, at the least, most suspicious, as is evidenced by the tone of Noor Mohamed when at Simla, and by the fact that Shere Ali continuously abstained from drawing the subsidy that had been granted to him, and which was lying to his credit in the Peshawur treasury. There is no doubt that, at first, the feeling of the late Ameer, as stated by the Duke of Argyle, was that of genuine fear of Russia, and had his advances at that time been met in a generous spirit, looking to the great issues at stake, recent events would probably never have occurred.

Unfortunately, the changed position brought about by circumstances, more particularly by the continuous and rapid advances of Russia, was not sufficiently recognised by the Liberal Government, when last in power, and naturally Shere Ali threw himself into the arms of his more energetic neighbour. He was not driven to this suicidal act by threatening letters, which were not really threatening, but because, to his mind, there was no alternative. He had been refused by us that support which could alone enable him to maintain the attitude which, according to our declarations, was necessary to secure our friendship and countenance, and in his despair he submitted to his and our common enemy. Having lost our opportunity, the error had to be repaired, and our first advance became inevitable. Even then Lord Lytton's Government showed every desire to return to the original position, as far as changed circumstances would permit of it. This is clear from the conditions of the treaty of Gandamak. The result of an advance upon Cabul itself was foreseen—the entire disintegration of the kingdom, which was certain to ensue, and it was avoided.*

Nothing is proved by history to be truer than that an opportunity once lost can never be regained. Support generously given at a critical moment might have preserved a strong government, such as it was, in Afghanistan; but to

* *Vide* Lord Lytton's despatches.

reconstruct it was beyond the power of either the English or Indian Governments, and the experiment failed. The Duke of Argyle condemned the despatch of the Cavagnari mission on the ground "that the objection of the late Ameer to receive British officers in his capital was that he could not protect them;" but the fact must not be lost sight of that he had in the interval received not only a Russian mission, but that practically Russia had been represented at his capital for a period of eighteen months, by a succession of special messengers, one never leaving until the arrival of the next, who was to replace him.

We have besides in evidence* that the only qualification insisted upon by the Ameer to the proposal that British officers should reside in his dominions, was that it should be at Cabul under his immediate protection, and further that it was not the intention of the Indian Government to propose Cabul for the residence of their representative. But "when the capital was thus expressly selected by the Ameer himself, there were many grounds for deferring to the choice of his Highness, and there was no tenable ground for opposing it." It is possible that the Indian Government was not sufficiently alive to the change of feeling that had been brought about by our hostile advance; but we contend that they were justified in their action. In fact that they would have neglected their

* Lord Lytton's despatch of January 7th, 1880.

duty had they not made the attempt to have their representative at a place so important to us as Cabul, and where Russian representatives had been received for a considerable time ; although perhaps it might have been wiser to have delayed sending him for a few months until things had become quieter, and the power of the Ameer had become consolidated.

Exception is then taken to the breach of faith, as the Duke of Argyle considers it would be, if we retained Candahar. But treaties are not binding on one of the signatories alone, but on all ; and in the case of that concluded at Gandamak, Yakoob Khan failed to keep his part of the engagements. It is a new theory, as advanced by his Grace, that Powers are precluded from taking such steps as may be necessary to their own security, or which are for the common weal, unless their territory is first invaded, and they have been subjected to two bloody wars, as in the case of the Punjab ; although, as far as the last title is concerned, we surely should have earned an indefeasible right to fixity of tenure at Candahar. We are under the impression that Russia was the aggressor in the last war with Turkey, but we do not recollect that the Duke of Argyle raised his voice in protest against her insistance on her right, the logical result of victory, to annex Bessarabia, with Kars and other territory in Asia, although she had bound herself by the treaty of 1856 to

respect the territorial integrity of her enemy. It is no excuse that the belligerents in that case were foreign Powers, as the final settlement was a European one, to which England was a party. As we have already, however, pointed out, the Indian Government were from the first anxious, as far as possible, to return to the old condition of things, a united friendly Afghanistan, free from the interference of other Powers. After the murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari, it was evident that a Government which was unable to keep its engagements and control even Cabul (we must remember that it was no mere assassination by a few fanatics, as argued by the Duke of Argyle, but such a movement among the population that the Ameer himself had to seek safety in our lines) would be absolutely powerless in more distant places. The opinion of the then Government of India was most decided on this point. They said in their despatch on the subject :—"The kingdom laboriously recovered by Shere Ali has fallen to pieces at the first blow; and it would now be an impracticable task, even were it politically desirable, to reunite these fragments under any single ruler."* The later history of that "strong Afghanistan" of Lord Lawrence and the Duke of Argyle bears out this view. Dost Mohammed, after many vicissitudes, only obtained possession of Candahar in 1856, and

* Lord Lytton's despatch of January 7th.

of Herat in 1863. It took Shere Ali five years to consolidate his power. Are we prepared to allow another like period of anarchy, now that Russia is in a position to interfere in the final settlement? Still the Government shrank from anything like annexation. "It is our desire to avoid territorial annexation, and the further extension of our administrative responsibilities. While maintaining a dominant influence over these provinces which form the outworks of our Indian Empire, we still desire to minimise our interference in their internal affairs."* And the united Afghanistan policy having failed, they determined to try a divided Afghanistan under native rulers, with what result, as regards Candahar, we all know.

There then seemed to be no alternative but annexation, until the present Government hit upon the desperate expedient they are about to try, of abandoning it. That policy we hold to be morally impossible. We have told the chiefs and people of the Candahar districts, a much more serious undertaking than any given to the Wali, that "there was no chance of Candahar again falling under a supreme ruler in Cabul." On the faith of that declaration many committed acts which must place them for ever in a position of hostility to any possible Cabul Government. Also during our occupation we

* Lord Lytton's despatch of January 7th.

have countenanced and encouraged commercial ventures and engagements which it is impossible can exist under any Government but our own, or one protected by and under our influence. It is impossible under these two heads alone to gauge the responsibility in the cause of peace or civilisation that we should incur, by abandoning to their fate those who considered themselves safeguarded by our most solemn declaration. Neither do our responsibilities end here. Lord Hartington has himself said, "I entirely admit that it would not be worthy of English honour, or of the English name, if we were to leave Afghanistan in its present condition. Having created the present state of things in Afghanistan, having reduced the country to perfect anarchy, having deprived it of all the elements which existed for the purpose of keeping order, it would not be possible for us to retire and leave this anarchy and confusion, and it will be necessary for any Government, whichever it may be, which succeeds the present one, to restore order in the country before it retires back behind its scientific frontier."*

It is true that we may not, at the moment we evacuate Candahar, leave the country in a state of anarchy, but we cannot avoid leaving the latent embers of it, which will blaze up in a few months, if not weeks, unless Afghanistan suddenly produces

* Speech at Oswaldtwistle, April 6th, 1880.

a heaven-born ruler of men, for which *rôle* neither Abdul Rahman nor Ayooob Khan have as yet shown any aptitude.

Politically, we shall by abandoning Candahar commit an act of national suicide in the East, which we believe history will condemn as highest treason to the British Empire. What underlies the whole policy of the Government seems to be the fanciful idea—we can call it nothing else—expressed in the following sentence by the Duke of Argyle: “Sir F. Roberts, not two years ago, found himself surrounded by the whole population of Afghanistan, those who have no national feeling, or independence, or sentiment, and was shut up in Shirpur.” Now, we do not desire to impute to the Duke of Argyle any wish to mislead his audience, or the country, but we presume that he had shared in the debates in the Cabinet on the subject; and we do say that any body of men so misinformed, or so incapable of drawing a correct impression from facts, are not fit to guide the country in a decision of so momentous a character. The facts are that Sir F. Roberts was attacked by the Ghilzais, and other tribes of Northern Afghanistan; that those districts were entirely cut off from Candahar by the Hazaras, at that time hostile to the Ghilzais, and that there was not the slightest sympathy between Northern and

Southern Afghanistan. An Afghanistan united in feeling on any subject is a figment of the Duke of Argyle's brain.

Lord Hartington, as his share to the reasons which have led himself and his colleagues to come to their disastrous determination, has little more to offer than a quotation from a despatch of the late Government of India, written under other circumstances, which do not now apply; the fear that the possession of Candahar will distract the minds of the Government of India from the construction of public works, and the agrarian condition of the people; and the opinion that there was no danger to India from foreign invasion, which nobody had ever maintained. He gives one more, which simply proves that the time to lock the stable door is when the steed is stolen. We cannot believe, looking to those evidences of high statesmanship which have won him the confidence of all parties alike, and point him out as the great Liberal Minister of the future, that he could have been altogether self-inspired when giving serious expression to such arguments. The concluding paragraph of his despatch refers to Mr. Lyall's mission to Candahar, and suggests that his report* may enable the Viceroy to form a more accurate judgment. Would it be too much to ask the Government to make public that gentleman's report, and the judgment on it at which the

* Blue Book, Afghanistan, No. 1, 1881.

present Viceroy has arrived? The wisdom of the proposed policy might be fairly tested, if the Government could be induced to answer the following questions:—

If Abdul Rahman is able to anticipate Ayooob Khan at Candahar, are they prepared to see Herat either under the direct influence of Russia, or of Russia through Persia?

Should Ayooob Khan anticipate Abdul Rahman, are they prepared to recognise the victor of Maiwand as its ruler, or do they still intend to pursue the policy of a united Afghanistan with the indefinite military obligations it may entail?

In either case, are they prepared to have so disturbed a condition of things immediately beyond our frontier, giving Russia directly or through Persia a fair excuse for interference, at any moment that may suit her?

It would not be the first time that she has so interfered. We need not go beyond the Kurdish rebellion, within the last few months, for an instance.

The above is written in no party spirit. We believe it to be a fair statement of facts; and we appeal to the evidence of the Blue Book to show that the weight of well-informed opinions is in favour of the view we advocate. Government may have other equally valuable opinions in their possession, but if so they have refused to produce it, and we are justified in considering, until they

do, that they have no further support for their policy. We only ask for a fair discussion on the merits of the case, our only object being the peaceable integrity of the empire, with the least possible burdens on its populations.

NOTE.

Since the foregoing was written, another Blue Book, Afghanistan 1881, No. 2, has been issued. It is hardly necessary to criticise it, as it adds nothing to the information already in the hands of the public.

It may be noticed, however, of Lord Lytton's minute, that it was written under other circumstances, dealing with great questions of policy, and was clearly never intended for publication. Although it is there declared that from a military point of view our position on the west leaves little to be desired, it is added that political or special military considerations may make it necessary for us to occupy Candahar, and the importance of Herat is specially urged.

Sir Garnet Wolseley gives weight to this opinion by saying, "Whenever the Russians march upon Herat, we must certainly occupy Candahar."

Surely the political and special military considerations indicated by Lord Lytton have arisen since General Skobelieff's late victories, and though he may not be marching upon Herat, his

position so far threatens it, that it would be madness to evacuate Candahar, with the certainty of having to return to it within a few years, if not months.

The publication of Sir D. Stewart's Memorandum in its present position is, as we have already pointed out in a note, misleading. It is dated April 18, 1879, being written in view of the circumstances prior to the treaty of Gandamak; and that his opinion has since been modified is proved by another Memorandum dated July 2, 1880. This last is quoted in the text.

Sir Henry Norman's estimate of the number of men required is, after all, a mere matter of opinion, and, as we have already stated, we have high military authority for the smaller force given in the Appendix. Again, his addition of 100 per cent. to the cost of maintaining the same troops in India, we believe to be excessive. In our estimate we have charged under this head what high military and financial authorities in consultation have considered not only a sufficient, but an extravagant amount, and we may point out that Sir W. Merewether and others, with a personal acquaintance with the country, believe that no extra expenditure would be eventually entailed.

Of the other Memorandums adverse to our continued occupation, we can only say, although extremely able, particularly Major Baring's, they, in our opinion, lose sight of one great fact. We could

understand their reasoning if Afghanistan could remain as it is, and if its people were not likely to be brought under fresh influences. But this is impossible. Civilisation always absorbs barbarism, and Afghanistan must eventually fall under the influence of Russia or England. We have now to decide which it shall be.

APPENDIX.



To elucidate the financial side of the question, we append a statement of the estimated cost of the occupation of Candahar, based on the opinions of the most reliable authorities that Government could consult. We premise that it does not take into consideration the fresh revenues we should obtain, and it assumes, in the larger total, that the whole force would be an increase to the garrison of India. We need hardly point out that the justification for a portion of the present establishment is the necessities of external defence, and that troops for such a purpose could nowhere be so well placed as at Candahar. That at any rate we could advance two native cavalry and two native infantry regiments from Scinde, viz., two out of the three regiments of Scinde Horse, and two from the two regiments of Belooch Infantry and Jacob's Rifles, and that holding Candahar we could dispense with one regiment of British Infantry at Peshawur.

We will only add that this is an extreme estimate, including ninety recruits at depôt in India for each cavalry and 200 for each infantry regiment, and that the force estimated for is based upon high military opinion as sufficient for the occupation of Candahar and maintenance of its communications.

ESTIMATE.

Detail of Force.	Pay and Ordinary Charges per Annum.	Extraordinary Charges.	TOTAL.
1 Battery Royal Horse Artillery ..	£ 16,700	£ 3,750	£ 20,450
1 Heavy Battery and 1 Mountain Battery, British)	25,000	7,500	32,500
2 Native Mountain Batteries	12,500	7,500	20,000
1 British Cavalry Regiment	48,000	12,000	60,000
3 Native Cavalry Regiments	66,000	30,000	96,000
4 British Infantry Regiments	200,000	27,000	227,000
10 Native Infantry Regiments	150,000	150,000	300,000
2 Companies Sappers	8,500	8,200	16,700
Transport	—	100,000	100,000
Total	526,700	345,950	872,650

If, as we believe to be the case, no addition to the force now in India would be requisite, the increased cost on account of the occupation of Candahar would only amount to 345,950*l.*, as shown above.

ORDINARY UNIT COST PER ANNUM of each branch of the Service in India, EUROPEAN and NATIVE, upon which the above is founded.

	Battery Royal Horse Artillery.	Battery Field Artillery.	Regiment British Cavalry.	Regiment British Infantry.	Regiment Native Cavalry.	Regiment Native Infantry.
	£	£	£	£	£	£
1. Pay and Allowances of Officers and Men	9800	8430	31,333	32,817	21,658	13,900
2. Commissariat Supplies	1460	1460	4667	9100	—	—
3. Ordnance Supplies	1578	1330	1500	1666	300	750
4. Purchase and keep of Horses	2448	1603	6750	—	—	—
5. Clothing, Barrack, and Medical Supplies	1414	1377	3750	6417	42	350
TOTAL	16,700	14,200 *	48,000	50,000	22,000	15,000

* The cost of a heavy battery, and a mountain battery (British), may be taken respectively at 13,000*l.* and 12,000*l.* per annum. The cost of a native mountain battery at 6250*l.* per annum.

[Faint, illegible handwriting on aged paper, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side. The text is mostly obscured by the texture and color of the paper.]