

INDIA'S DANGER AND ENGLAND'S DUTY.

The History of the
Russian Advance
UPON
AFGHANISTAN.

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.



WARD, LOCK & CO., LONDON and NEW YORK.

INDIA'S DANGER
AND
ENGLAND'S DUTY

WITH REFERENCE TO

RUSSIA'S ADVANCE

INTO THE TERRITORY IN DISPUTE UPON THE
BORDERS OF AFGHANISTAN.

BY

RICHARD RUSSELL.

With Maps and Illustrations.

WARD, LOCK AND CO.

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SIR PETER LUMSDEN.

Khiva R U S S I A N T U R K E S T A N T H I B E T



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF AFGHANISTAN.

P R E F A C E.



DURING periods of popular excitement it is more than usually important that judgment should be guided by knowledge of the facts out of which the excitement has arisen.

The facts which bear directly and indirectly upon the Anglo-Russian dispute of 1885 extend over wide fields, and the object of the succeeding pages is to bring them within the comprehensive view of the popular reader, as well as within the reach of all to whom economy of time, as well as of money, is of practical importance.

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INDIA'S DANGER AND ENGLAND'S DUTY.

CHAPTER I.

THE EXCITING CRISIS AND ITS STARTLING TRAGEDY.

THE season of Easter in 1885 will be long remembered as emphatically marking the period of a crisis in public affairs more momentous than any in its generation. Some days before the 1st of March rumours had been current that the military situation on the borders of Afghanistan was becoming more strained. On the 3rd of March questions on the subject were put in the House of Lords; and Lord Granville, in his reply said, "According to the latest reports, the Russian outposts have occupied the Zulfikar Pass, about twenty miles to the south of Pul-i-Khatun, Akrobat, between Zulfikar and the river Khushk and Sari-Yazi. Representations are being made to the Russian Government earnestly pressing them to give stringent orders to their military commander to refrain from any further forward movements, which would bring about a collision between the Afghan and Russian outposts. The Russian Government, in reply to the remonstrance from her Majesty's Government, declined, on Feb. 24, to withdraw their advanced posts at Sari-Yazi and the Zulfikar Pass, but gave assurances that their officers had been ordered carefully to avoid conflicts with the Afghans, and that complications were only to be feared in the event of the Afghans attacking the Russian posts."

Hurried suggestions immediately appeared in the daily papers that the Government must, of course, demand the withdrawal of the Russian forces, and it was confidently asserted that such a demand had been made. The situation was qualified on the 13th of March, when Mr. Gladstone announced in the House of Commons, that: "It has been agreed between Russia and England that

no further advances are to be made on either side." There was a still further qualification on the 16th of March, when Mr. Gladstone explained that—"The word 'agreement' is a little fallacious; I prefer to call it an 'arrangement,'" and the arrangement, as interpreted by the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, was that "Russian troops will not advance from the positions now occupied by them, provided that the Afghan forces do not advance or attack, or unless in case of some extraordinary reason, such, for instance, as a disturbance at Penj-deh; and that the strictest orders have been sent to the Russian commanders to avoid, by every possible means, a conflict or any incitement to conflict, and that these orders will be repeated."

Upon the strength of that very qualified assurance the public had to rely. The House of Lords rose for the Easter recess on the 30th of March, and, in anticipation of the interval then ensuing, the subject was raised on the 27th, on which occasion the Duke of Argyll briefly expressed a very general sentiment when he took the opportunity of saying: "As far as I understand the position of affairs, they are entirely altered from what they were. I am still of opinion that it was highly inexpedient to remonstrate with Russia on what were called her advances in Central Asia, which were in reality inevitable. I was always of opinion that up to the point of the possession of Merv the progress of Russia in that country was inevitable and, on the whole, was not undesirable, for the result of my inquiries went to show that Merv was a nest of robbers and that there was no possibility of any peace or any progress or any commerce in Central Asia until the Turkomans had been subdued under some civilised Power. But from the moment that Russia arrived at Merv and put one step forward towards Herat the whole political situation became altered. (Hear, hear.) I must express the pleasure with which I have heard the assurance of my noble friend that Her Majesty's Government will not be accused of any flinching or weakness in this matter, and that they are determined to hold to what they believe to be the policy of this country in regard to Afghanistan, and that they are resolved to support the Afghan kingdom in the defence to the utmost extent of its ancient territory."

On the 31st of March, on the motion for adjournment of the House of Commons for the Easter recess, the Marquis of Hartington entered into explanations which reiterated former statements

to the effect that the strong interest manifested in the incidents of the day was owing to the obligations of the British and Indian Governments to the Ameer of Afghanistan, and the undertaking in force which committed our Government to the defence of the Ameer against any encroachments by Russia upon any frontier of his dominions.

With the foregoing facts thus vividly placed before the public, Parliament adjourned until the 9th of April, and early in the morning of that very day there arrived the news that, as long previously as the 30th of March, Russia, as expressed in the *Times*, "making a pretext of a change in the position of the Afghan outposts, attacked the Afghans at Penj-deh and drove them out." The morning papers were reprinted to the extent of three or four editions, and they conveyed the tragic information that the Russian General-in-chief, General Komaroff, attacked the fortified position of the Afghans on both banks of the Khushk River. An engagement ensued, and the Afghans, whose force consisted of 4,000 men with eight guns, were defeated and dispersed with the loss of about 500 killed, the whole of their artillery, two standards, the entire camp, with the park of artillery and provisions. The Afghans fought stubbornly, but the day was wet, and their muzzle-loaders were ineffective. Two companies defended one position till every man was killed. The Afghans retreated in perfect order to Meruchak, and no pursuit was made. The Sariks remained neutral, but plundered the Afghan camp. The Russian loss is said to have been great.

General Komaroff reported to his Government that his attack was in consequence of the provocative and manifestly hostile proceedings of the Afghans, which compelled him to take the proceedings he did, and that when the fight was over he returned across the Khushk river to his former position, from which the inference seems to have been intended that he acted in self-defence, and not with any intention of effecting or executing a further advance, though, according to the announcement of Lord Granville on the 3rd of March, the Russian forces must have moved forward between the 3rd and the 30th to a position considerably farther east.

On the news becoming known public excitement was manifested in various directions. A tremendous panic set in on the Stock Exchange, which continued unabated all day, so that when the doors were shut the members and outside jobbers remained in

great and noisy crowds, contending and bargaining in the open streets.

Eager curiosity was felt in anticipation of statements of ministers upon the reassembling of Parliament. Hundreds of anxious spectators besieged the approaches to the House of Commons, and cheered ministers as they entered, but the House itself was not more than half full when Mr. Gladstone rose to make his statement. It substantially confirmed the news already published, with some additions. These were to the effect, amongst other particulars, that, at the time of the attack the Russian commanding officers professed to be ignorant of the arrangement that neither party should advance; but the point which seemed to make the most impression was that, prior to the Russian movement the Afghans had neither attacked nor advanced, which seemed to imply a direct violation by the Russians of the arrangement before entered into. Following these statements, Mr. Gladstone, with the utmost solemnity of manner, said: "The House will not be surprised when I say, speaking with measured words and in circumstances of great gravity, that to us, upon the statements which I have recited, this attack bears the appearance of an unprovoked attack."

Later in the evening, however, Mr. Gladstone made another most important communication. He explained that whereas Sir Peter Lumsden indicated in his first telegram that no advance had been made by the Afghans prior to the battle, and no provocation given to the Russians, which conflicted with General Komaroff's report that the Russian attack was provoked by the menacing attitude of the Afghans, in a second telegram, Sir Peter Lumsden virtually confirmed the Russian General's statements, admitting that the Afghans prior to the attack had occupied stronger and better strategical military positions; though he did not consider this an advance.

These last statements, which clearly showed nothing distinctly except that nothing was clear, were calculated to increase the difficulty and embarrassment of the situation, and to stimulate further apprehensions that war was inevitable. The next morning the newspapers announced that the financial panic had extended to Paris; that rates for marine insurance had been enormously increased; that much of the Manchester cotton-trade had come to a dead lock in consequence of the total cessation of buying

or export; that the prices of corn all over the country had rapidly gone up, and that the news flashed across the Atlantic had created such an excitement in the American corn trade as was scarcely ever experienced, one of the markets being described as like Bedlam.

The efforts that had been going on in England for more than a month to increase the resources of the army and navy were redoubled, some of the establishments working double time. Before the week was out wheat had gone up in Mark Lane fully five shillings a quarter, and while all persons interested in the supply of the adjuncts of war were jubilant, a large proportion of the industrial and trading community saw reason for the gloomiest forebodings.

At such a period of national trial, it is incumbent upon everyone to obtain a comprehensive view of the merits of the crisis which has arisen out of the wide field of circumstances disclosed to view in the following pages.

CHAPTER II.

ENGLAND'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO INDIA.

THE modern struggle for dominion in Asia arises, in the first place, from the decay and extinction of the religions which dominated the best parts of that great continent in the remotest periods of antiquity to which any passable records refer; and in the second place, to the replacement of those religions, over vast areas, by Mahometanism. Hence, while the most ancient religions have declined in their former influence, and the nations that were once under that influence have lost whatever unity of purpose they ever possessed, they have, in great part, been given over to the enervating fatalism into which the former energy of Mahometanism has almost everywhere sunk.

The resulting demoralisation of the nations thus affected, is apparent over an immense tract of the surface of the globe, extending from the eastern extremities of the Mediterranean to the confines of China; Mahometanism having been apparently checked in its eastward course by the stubborn adherence of the Burmese to so much of the religion of Buddha as appears to retain all its vices while disregarding all its virtues, if it ever had any. The broad result appears to have been, for some centuries past, a gradual relapse towards barbarism, its ignorance and ferocity being rather stimulated than qualified by contact with more advanced nations, from whom have been acquired merely the instruments with which wars may be more effectively prosecuted between the tribes and nations, who are mutually jealous of agrarian encroachments, and who seem incapable of activity except for the purpose of resisting such encroachments, or of prosecuting nefarious enterprises.

The deplorable consequences of this state of anarchy are almost everywhere apparent. Some of the fairest regions that were formerly cultivated and fruitful, have become barren; many a broad tract, evidently at some earlier period a smiling garden, has become a howling wilderness; cities and their populations have

disappeared, all but their meagre ruins and remains; the desolation of neglect and indifference is visible in all directions. And while the degree of prosperity which seems to have once prevailed has failed to continue in its ancient forms, modern efforts at revival are scarcely ever apparent. Grand resources are left undeveloped; amazing fertility is allowed to run waste; mineral and metallic wealth lies dormant and untouched; the veil of ignorance and superstition overshadows everything.

It was out of elements like these, existing in the richest and most accessible part of southern Asia, that arose the British conquest of India. Great as were the vices and weaknesses of humanity in that gorgeous region, such were the splendid developments of nature there, such the abundance of the rivers, such the fructifying power of the sun's beneficent rays, such the exhaustless richness of the soil, that they were proof against the extreme decadence which prevailed elsewhere, and, notwithstanding an occasional famine and other drawbacks, built up piles of produce and of riches from year to year, and from century to century.

Such teeming and tempting wealth was too attractive to be left alone. It was as a rare example of golden fruit, appealing to an appreciating hand to pluck it in its ripeness, lest it should otherwise fall into rotten oblivion. With such a prize in view, the courage, and energy, and quenchless spirit of adventure, sailing from our bracing shores, though exercised by mere handfuls of men, carried with them determination so strong and enduring that they were more than a match for the countless millions who divided amongst them that fairest of the domains of antiquity. Out of the resulting conquest springs all our present interest in the subject before us.

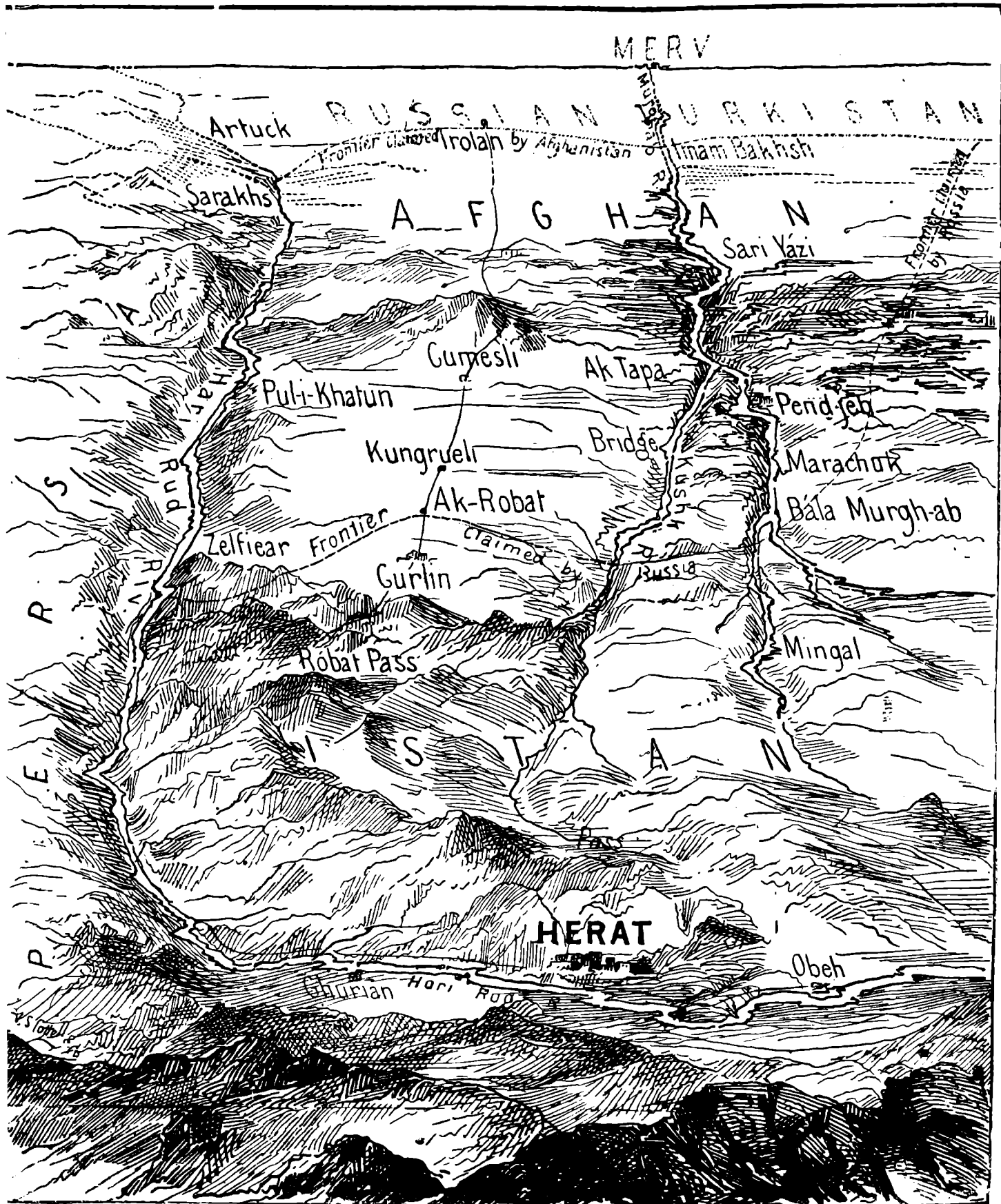
It was a peculiarity of India that though Mahometanism did for a time run riot throughout the peninsula, and made many efforts to render its rule permanent there, it was eventually compelled to retire in favour of its predecessors. Brahmaism, professing to date back its footing to 2000 B.C., had previously had to contend with the encroachments of Buddhism, said to have arisen as early as 956 B.C. They seem to have mutually destroyed each other by a slow process of amalgamation, the hybrid result being the enervating Hinduism which now includes 139 millions of a total population of 240 millions, 40 millions being all who remain Mahometans; while Christians do not number so much as one million.

The political condition of the people was equally unfortunate.

Early in the tenth century, previous attempts at government became concentrated at Delhi, under the first Mahometan invader, Mahmoud of Ghuzni. That dynasty was superseded by invaders from Khorassan, the last ruler of that dynasty being assassinated in 1206. Dismemberment ensued, aggravated by Afghan incursions until Timour, the Tartar Mogul, succeeded in establishing his empire, by unexampled massacre, about 1400. Dismemberment again ensued until 1526, when Baber, a descendant of Timour, again established almost universal empire, under the ancient rule of Delhi; and a successor of his, Shah Jehan, created what was called the Golden Age of the Moguls; soon after which their power was finally split up, giving place to numerous contending princes and parties, amongst whom there was no unity of purpose and no adequate motive for seeking to establish or restore union.

With such elements of discord abounding throughout the peninsula, and especially on its shores, it is not surprising that the numerous divided states and peoples became a ready prey to European enterprise. Diversity of religion aggravated the still worse condition of diversity of rule, and while the superstition and ignorance of the people tended to accumulate vast wealth in the hands of their princes, the princes were constantly engaged in contentions that created further divisions and hostilities innumerable.

One of these princes was the Zamorin, or Raja, of Malabar, and the first modern European designs upon India were associated with him. There sailed from Lisbon, in 1497, a Portuguese expedition under Vasco da Gama, who, being the first to proceed by doubling the Cape of Good Hope, arrived off the city of Calicut on May 20, 1498. The immediate result was a friendly interchange of sentiments which sowed the seeds of the ultimate trade between India and Europe. Da Gama was so very successful from a trading point of view that, after six months, he sailed on his return, bearing a letter from the Raja to the King of Portugal, from which the following notable words are quoted: "Vasco da Gama, a nobleman of your household, has visited my kingdom and has given me great pleasure. In my kingdom there is abundance of cinnamon, cloves, ginger, pepper, and precious stones. What I seek from thy country is gold, silver, coral, and scarlet." The return of Da Gama, bearing this letter, was celebrated at Lisbon with enthusiastic popular rejoicings, in emulation of those shortly



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE CITY AND VICINITY OF HERAT.

before indulged in upon the return of Columbus from America, and the rejoicings were more seasonable than was, perhaps, suspected, for the friendly understanding that Da Gama had established resulted in the enjoyment of the entire monopoly of Oriental trade by the Portuguese until late in the sixteenth century.

It is desirable to observe that, during the whole of this prolonged period, the Portuguese seem to have limited their enterprise to trade. There is no evidence, or very little, that they ever sought to exercise political power in any part of India, or to effect conquests of its territory. In so limiting themselves it is probable that they put the princes of India off their guard with reference to the tragic events which eventually ensued. Had the arts of peace and the emulations of commerce thus continued to prevail over temptation to war and lust of power, many a human misery there and elsewhere would have been spared, and the crisis of 1885 would never have taken so questionable a shape. Not indirectly only, but directly and emphatically, did the earlier ambitions which so cruelly reversed the policy of the Portuguese, lay the foundations—deep and ineradicable—of these later troubles, as will in due time fully appear.

It was the fate of India that the Portuguese extended their enterprises farther East, and eventually concentrated themselves rather upon the Islands than upon the peninsula of India. The first break in their monopoly was effected by Cornelius Houtman, who, at the head of a Dutch expedition, arrived at Sumatra in 1596. The principal result was the acquisition by Holland of Java. Meanwhile, however, the operations of the Dutch had created circumstances which, out of the smallest and meanest elements, were destined to operate powerfully upon the destiny of England and India alike. The particular element which turned the scale of events, as it were by a grain, was the price of pepper, concerning which article the Dutch contrived to possess the monopoly in the English market. Prior to the year 1599, their price had been three shillings per pound, but they raised it until it reached six shillings, and afterwards eight shillings. This proved too much even for British endurance. On the 22nd of September the merchants of London held a meeting at Founders' Hall, ostensibly to protest against the said exorbitant price of pepper. The Lord Mayor presided, and the result of the meeting was that in Founders' Hall was founded

the first East India Company, which was persevered with, eventually incorporated by royal charter of Queen Elizabeth, on the 31st of December, 1600, its full title being: "The Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading to the East Indies," and the capital was £70,000. A rival company was chartered by Oliver Cromwell in 1655, and a still stronger company got incorporated in 1698 as "The General Society Trading to India," with a capital of two millions sterling. A record is characteristic of those times, that "the old East India Company lost their business against the new company by ten votes in Parliament, so many of their friends being absent, going to see a tiger baited by dogs." This last company was known as the English, as distinguished from the first or London company, but they eventually made friends and amalgamated in 1709, as "The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies," and the amalgamation was so strong that it advanced to the then Government a loan of £3,190,000 at 3 per cent., in consideration of which the Government conceded a monopoly of trade to all places between the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Magellan.

The business arising out of the East India Company was at first carried on by separate ships, each ship being the separate venture of the individual subscribers to it, but after 1612 all the business was upon the joint-stock principle. It is said that the profits were at least 100 per cent., a proportion calculated to stimulate not a little the tiger-baiting spirit which ultimately became so conspicuous, and which grew more and more in face of the strenuous opposition of the Portuguese throughout the Indian seas. One by one the English established their so-called "factories" upon the various Oriental coasts, and immense prosperity resulted. In 1614, after various skirmishings, the English Company's fleet resisted a strong attack of Portuguese, and the latter were beaten in four successive engagements. Ever after that date, the English were in the ascendant as compared with the Portuguese, but serious disputes had to be settled with the French.

In 1746, during the European war between the two countries, a French squadron arrived at Madras, to which squadron the city surrendered without resistance. The only settlement thus left to the English was Fort St. David, near Pondicherry, and for a time the English were in a subordinate position; but Madras was eventually restored to them by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. Subse-

quent rivalries between the English and French terminated in 1761, in the decisive and final defeat of the latter at Waudebash, which was immediately followed by surrenders which left not a single ensign of the French nation by the authority of its Government in any part of India.

From that time the East India Company, under the leadership of Clive, gradually superseded all other Europeans in the peninsula, and seriously set about the gigantic task of subduing the whole country and people. Clive's energy and audacity easily overcame the fitful resistance of the unorganised populations and divided provinces, and he virtually became the ruler of India in 1758, when he was appointed by the Court of Directors to be the first governor of all the Company's settlements in Bengal; and thus the English, who began with paying rent for their settlements to the Indian princes, ended with exacting taxes from both princes and people.

The Company claimed, amongst innumerable other exceptional privileges and monopolies, that of carrying on private trade throughout the peninsula free from inland dues and all other imposts, and this, as well as other causes of offence, led to continual attempts at resistance on the part of the Hindus. In these and all other respects the Hindus were conquered. However great, in their day and generation, may have been the moral force of the conquerors, or however superior their military genius, the most obvious conclusion to be derived from the history of those struggles is that the resistance met with was at all times feeble and generally not much above the grade of imbecility. Of this we have an illustrative instance in the case of Madras. When that city was occupied by the French, as previously noted, a native army of 10,000 marched upon it with the intention of recovering possession, but it was utterly and finally routed by a French force of only 400 men and two pieces of artillery. After that, it is not surprising that, upon the appearance of Clive at a later date, with 1,000 Europeans, 2,100 Sepoys, and nine pieces of artillery, a native army of 50,000 foot and 18,000 horse fled in disorder, after scarcely more than one volley. Such cases, references to which could be multiplied, serve to explain how Clive and his fellow officers succeeded in leading expeditions, for hundreds of miles at a stretch, through wide tracts of the vast interior of the country, amid a hostile people that proved to be such magnanimous enemies, serious resistance being the rare exception to the contrary rule.

Clive made it abundantly evident that through the cloud of military glory he saw the ultimate profit. He did not fail to perceive that unlimited extortions could be extracted out of such a contemptible people by the mere terror of the English name. He availed himself of the idea to the full, and left behind him at once a tradition and an example which his successors were not slow to remember and to adopt with avidity, in proportion as the dominion of the Company increased in area and power.

That dominion was of the most exceptional character. From the status of a mere trading corporation, with specific objects almost as limited as those of a bank or a railway, the Company ultimately assumed a territorial and political importance only second to the imperial Government, involving many secondary as well as primary dangers to the mother country which gradually became appreciated amongst statesmen, and which led to an extraordinary degree of Parliamentary excitement in 1783 and the following year.

Various acts of Parliament had previously been passed, on the one hand conferring amazing monopolies and powers upon the Company, on the other somewhat furtively seeking to control it. An act of 1773 restrained the appointment of commissioners of the Company. In 1783, Fox passed through the Commons a bill designed to bring the Company under the direct control of the home Government, but the Lords threw the bill out; upon which Fox resigned. Pitt brought in an opposition bill, but the Commons rejected it by 222 to 214. Pitt soon afterwards appealed to the country, and the new Parliament passed his bill on the 18th of May, 1784. Its primary provision was the appointment of commissioners—being members and nominees of the home Government—"from time to time to superintend, direct, and control all acts, operations and concerns which in any wise relate to the civil or military government or revenue of the British territorial possessions in the East Indies." The commission thus constituted at once took office, and was subsequently recognised as a department of the Government, under the designation of the Board of Control. It was reconstituted, with some alterations, in 1793, and was entirely empowered and enlarged afresh in 1833, by the Act 3 & 4 Wm. IV., c. 85, by which the Government of India was continued in the Company (subject to the Board of Control) upon condition that it forthwith closed its commercial business and relinquished trading

for its own profit, which was the very reverse of the course proposed in Pitt's first bill.

In consideration of the relinquishment of trading the Company was authorised to pay upon its stock, out of the revenues of India, dividends at the rate of $10\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., subject to redemption at double par. The power of government still retained was limited until April 30, 1854, but a continuing act was passed in 1853, with some alterations, and that act continued in force till 1858.

By an act of 1858 the East India Company was finally abolished, and all its property and powers were vested in the Crown, the Board of Control ceasing in favour of a new Council of India, consisting of fifteen nominees of the home Government, subject to the Secretary of State for India. Thus was conferred upon this country, government and dominion over an immense territory of 900,000 square miles, and a people numbering at the present moment 240 millions. Considering its area and population, it is of itself the greatest empire of the world, the Queen of England being its Empress; and such is the ultimate result this day of that sturdy protest against the advancing price of pepper, which so deeply moved the quaint imaginations of the ancestors of so many of the existing citizens of London.

But, together with that dominion and that empire, we took over responsibilities of the gravest character. Without attempting to estimate the measureless value of the treasure directly and indirectly lavished upon the bolstering up of the Company during its existence, since the Council was constituted, the cost of India to the tax-payers of this country cannot be put at less than five hundred millions sterling. Apart from that, we have been compelled by the stubbornness of fortune to succeed to a heritage of spoliation and wrong which centuries of good government would scarcely suffice to redeem. The Company, while taking its $10\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., with the alternative of redemption in corresponding measure, was allowed to cast upon us as a people the incubus of an evil reputation in the land where they made their money, reeking with wars and rebellions, and mutinies and massacres, with which the hands of the Company were red to the very last.

Upon the present and future generations of Britain rests the obligation of wiping away the shame, and of erecting in its place a monument of noble recompense, based upon a self-denying determination to do justice where injustice has so long been done

in our name. How to ensure such justice is a problem worthy of the highest exercise of statesmanship, and, however the good is to be accomplished, it certainly cannot be by abandoning the people to anarchy, the last end of which must be worse than the first. Still less can it be accomplished by giving the suffering and hoping people over to the dominion of a despotic power in rivalry if not in enmity with ourselves. That must be prevented at any cost.

CHAPTER III.

RUSSIA, THE POWER WE MUST COPE WITH.

REMOTE and improbable as it might have seemed to the merchants of London who initiated the East India Company, yet it was inevitable that the dominion of England in India must some day come into sharp comparison and perhaps rivalry with the dominion of Russia. Such would perhaps have seemed a very extravagant suggestion in 1599, for at that time Russia was scarcely an Asiatic power, but then, neither was England. For all practical purposes they both began to be so about the same time, though the circumstances of each were so extremely different.

Looking at a map of the eastern hemisphere to-day, it seems almost beyond belief that for ages after England had been known as Britain under the Druids and had been the scene of important Roman conquests; after the ancient Britons had suffered and bled their last, or had finally retired into the mountain retreats of Cambria and were utterly beaten and broken; after the Romans had subdued and civilised amongst our ancestors for five centuries and had departed never to return; after Hengist and Horsa had worked their ancient wonders and the Saxon Heptarchy had arisen, ruled for four centuries more, and died; after all these things had made stirring and picturesque history for a thousand years, there was no Russia, and there were no Russians in any part of the world.

During all that period, which did so much towards creating and consolidating for us a habitation and a name, the greater part of what is now called Russia was a vast blank in the fathomless depths of pre-historic times, handing down to us not a shred of a record and not so much as the ghost of a tradition wherewith to lighten the darkness by which its former existence is surrounded so long after our history had taken tangible shape.

It can only be reasonably imagined that that vast region, throughout its whole extent, was then more or less inhabited or over-run by innumerable tribes, more or less barbarous, who contended with each other for their footing upon earth; some being by accident better than others, and consequently tilling the soil or accumulat-

ing flocks and herds, but probably many more mere savage vagabonds, living upon the plunder of their thrifty neighbours, and valuing very little for their own sakes either the lives of themselves or others. Amongst these the people known as Huns and Goths seem to have been the most numerous, but hardship, famine, neglect, and disease must indeed, in such a climate and in such circumstances, have made life precarious enough to keep down the most prolific population for hundreds of centuries, and wars, relatively great or contemptibly small, must have done their cruel share towards preserving the balance of subsistence which human increase is so liable to outrun in happier cases. It is probably owing to the numerous checks upon population that must have existed, that the region contributed so little, until comparatively late times, to the incursions amongst more advanced peoples, of hordes of depredators, they having previously been sufficiently occupied amongst themselves.

Such imagination for what it is worth is relieved by at least one tradition, that prior to the opening of their more definite history there dwelt, on and contiguous to the eastern shores of the Baltic, some of the best of the Slavonic and Finnish tribes, who, in the cultivation of the arts of peace, had ceased to make war the primary business of life, as so many did who lived too near them to be comfortable. These peaceful tribes, being harassed beyond endurance by incursions which they felt too weak to resist, did what some people nearer to our homes were once prone to do, and sent for someone else to help them; who helped them with a vengeance.

The warlike visitors who responded to the guileless invitation belonged to a Scandinavian race known then as Varangians. Whether they arrived by sea or land is not stated, but they did arrive, as it seems very promptly, and as promptly did the work they were wanted for; but, having done that, instead of going home they remained and reduced their would-be hosts to subjection. Probably the reason why they did not go home was that they had no home to go to, and found the home they had been invited to highly convenient.

The leader of these enterprising Scandinavian bandits was Ruric, and it was hence his very remarkable destiny to found the Russia of to-day, the material commencement of it being the building of a town near the bend of the Gulf of Finland, where Old Ladoga now stands, and there he duly established his seat of

government about A.D. 862. Carrying on his warlike enterprises, he was uniformly victorious, and eventually transferred his government to Novgorod, which was already a considerable city, a position in the very centre of European Russia, denoting a remarkable breadth of influence and conquest within one lifetime.

The successor of Ruric was Oleg, who, continuing victorious, acquired possession of Kief, which in its turn became his capital, and he had already extended the dominion of Russia to such a degree that he there collected an army of 80,000, who, embarking in 2,000 vessels, descended the Dnieper to the Black Sea, overcame incredible obstacles, and attacked Constantinople. The people there, like some of our own, not wanting to fight, though having the men and money too, were glad to escape from the infliction of siege and sack by buying the enemy off, and Oleg returned to Kief laden with consequent riches.

Oleg was succeeded by Igor, the son of Ruric. Rebellions immediately ensued; he succeeded in thoroughly quelling them, but, after attacking the Greeks (first being defeated and on a second occasion victorious), he was killed in a massacre by Drevlians in 945. His son was Sviatoslaf, but as he was very young his mother Olga became the ruler. She ruled well from a Russian point of view, as she was cruel, treacherous, resorted to stratagems, assassination, massacre, and destruction of cities by fire, whenever she considered any such courses necessary to the maintenance of power. After ten years of these energetic exercises, desiring to become Christian, she went to Constantinople for the purpose of being formally received into the Greek church. Her baptism took place accordingly, and she was the first Russian to receive the rite, but her departure for Constantinople was virtually an act of abdication, and her son, before referred to, forthwith succeeded her.

Sviatoslaf reigned with all the merciless ferocity he had inherited from his mother and previous ancestors. Amongst other achievements he completely annihilated the inhabitants on the shores of the Caspian and in the Caucasus, and committed Bulgarian atrocities on the Danube compared to which modern instances pale into insignificance. He was eventually defeated, and, fleeing from a pursuing enemy, was soon afterwards slain in 973.

We have thus glanced at a little more than the first century of Russian dominion. When the smallness of the beginning is considered—absolutely nothing—compared with the immense breadth

of conquest achieved in about 111 years, extending to the whole or nearly the whole of what is now European Russia, and considering that the conquest has endured to this day, there is nothing like a parallel to it in the history of the world. Judging from that one century, the inherent ability and infatuation for making territorial acquisitions is overwhelmingly obvious. Russian enterprises of the same character have justly excited keen observation at later dates, but they have been conducted upon a broad base of previous advantage which Ruric and his immediate successors did not possess, and the later results are therefore not so great in proportion.

It becomes vitally interesting at the present juncture to discover if we can what are the existing elements which may be said to account for the immense breadth and rapidity of Russian expansion. In the first place, it is impossible to exclude the fact that the lowermost foundation of it is the instinctive ferocity of a comparatively recent origin of savage barbarism. In this respect Olga, previously referred to, was a type of her ancestors, contemporaries, and descendants. She exhibited a degree of cruelty which was without a tinge of mercy or compassion; cruelty for its own sake, independently of the ends it was to serve, taking the specious form of severity equally without excuse or justification.

Combined with this barbarous instinct of innate cruelty as a pleasure (depicted in the past history of its rulers), the Russian character exhibits the insatiable greed before referred to for territorial aggrandisements, not because it is any practical advantage, but for the mere satisfaction of possession and domination, in the spirit of the miser's insane clutching at gold of which he never hopes to avail himself for any substantial good.

There is also exhibited a tendency to a curious grim satisfaction in the conscious ability and readiness to endure hardship and privation. Of this we have a prominent example in Sviatoslaf. As a means to the dominating end, his first care was to improve his army. With that object he voluntarily lived in camp; shared duties and dangers with the lowest grades of his soldiers; restricted himself to the simplest and coarsest food; disdained to provide a tent even for himself, but slept on the ground wrapped in a bear's-skin.

We have here an explanation of the peculiar characteristics of the Russian army. Sviatoslaf was not the first or last of equal rank to do likewise. It is said that his army was consequently

stimulated to willingly undergo the extremest endurance and suffering. Having such few wants it required the smallest imaginable quantity of baggage, and could consequently effect long and distant expeditions with exceptional rapidity. The prominent and absorbing importance also given to the army rendered it comparatively easy to increase and maintain its numbers, and, even in those early and comparatively undeveloped times, Sviatoslaf was able to include 300,000 fighting men in one military expedition.

Another element which seems to point to an explanation of Russia's permanent successes is the character of its laws. From information of various kinds, gathered near and far, in the narratives of travellers, or in official communications, it seems that the extreme centralisation of the imperial government necessarily leaves the superintendence of provincial matters very much more at the discretion of local option than in any other country of the old world. So long as the people bow down to the supremacy of the principle of personal rule, they may otherwise do very much as they like, especially in the remotest districts; at the same time the broad principles laid down, by a despotism that claims the character of beneficence, must be sufficiently observed.

In common with many other ancient potentates, it seems that the heads of the Russian power have been striking examples of ability and disposition to rule everything but their own caprices and passions, and to make laws accordingly for the better ordering of other people, to which—both people and laws—they presume themselves to be superior. It seems, therefore, that the very earliest of the Russian conquerors promulgated codes of laws which, on the face of them, were far more liberal than the corresponding laws of other countries at the same date. Thus, it is upon record so early as the end of the ninth century, that murder was punishable by death without the alternative of a fine, no matter what the rank of the murderer; that a thief was required to restore the stolen goods, together with three times their value; wives were entitled to a share of their husbands' property; punishment did not extend to confiscation of goods, hence widows and orphans did not suffer for crimes of which they were innocent; citizens might dispose of their effects in favour of friends without fear of the sovereign seizing on their heritage, a provision in striking contrast to the powers exercised by bishops on behalf of the Crown of England during the middle ages.

A stronger element of boundless unity than any other has always been the cultivation of religion in Russia for political purposes. This point comes out with notable force in the reigns immediately succeeding that of Sviatoslaf. In the exercise of an unaccountable inconsistency, he deliberately partitioned his dominions amongst his three sons, and, according to the fraternal tendencies of royalty in the good old times, elsewhere as well as there, the three sons flung themselves into a turbulent contest for the sole mastery, which ultimately devolved upon Vladimar. He attained to the coveted supremacy partly by the unhesitating infliction of the most excessive atrocities, but, as it appears, mainly on account of the influence he obtained through his conspicuous resort to religious rites and observances.

In common with all his predecessors he was a pagan, for Olga's efforts, after her own conversion, to convert her son and his subjects had totally failed. Vladimar of course made wars, especially upon the Poles and Bulgarians, and his devout exercises, conducted in the presence of assemblages of his own people, mainly consisted of sacrifices of prisoners at the shrines of the national gods; which exhibitions no doubt made the kind of impression he intended upon his savage fellows, who were traditional votaries of the same frightful form of paganism.

Pushing his borders in westerly and southerly directions, he eventually had opportunities of witnessing the imposing gorgeousness of the religious observances of the Greek church, and, concluding that that was the kind of thing that would be likely to charm and further impose upon his subjects, he promptly obtained admission to the church at Constantinople, and further improved the occasion by obtaining in marriage the princess Anna, sister of Constantine. With her he returned to his capital, and demonstrated the power of his new religion by ostentatiously destroying the old temples and idols and building churches in their stead. Simultaneously he refrained from the cruel courses he had formerly indulged in, and hesitated even to take the lives of criminals. He promoted the introduction of the merchandise and arts of other countries, and sought to make such improvements as were possible in the condition of his people.

After striving thus to consolidate and increase his power and influence, he fell into the amazing inconsistency inherited from his father, and carried it to such excess that he partitioned his territories

amongst his twelve sons, one of whom, prematurely seeking to exercise the authority designed for him, headed a rebellion against Vladimar, who died of vexation and grief, while on an expedition intended to put down that rebellion in the year 972.

The father was too late. The twelve sons seized upon the provinces respectively assigned to them, and Russia was for a considerable time totally dismembered, and was further broken up into no less than seventeen principalities, each claiming separate independence. Availing themselves of these divisions, the Mogul Tartars from Central Asia made several successive incursions into Europe, overpowered the disorganised Russians, took possession of Novgorod and Kief, made havoc with fire and sword in every direction, destroyed cities, and, being pagans, they were especially active in demolishing churches.

The whole of European Russia continued in a state of anarchy for several succeeding centuries; chiefly owing to the disastrous consequences of Vladimar's will, but also because of the imperfect introduction of Christianity, which resulted in the most violent diversities of religion. During this period history is very obscure and unreliable, and the details are of no broad interest. The earliest of the Russian despots, whom we have noticed as the actual founders of the existing empire, though exercising in their time all the authority of kings or something more, appear in Russian history as merely the Dukes of Kief, which titles were continued until the year 1157, when history begins to designate the chief rulers of the Russians as the Grand Dukes of Vladimar, a succession of no less than seventeen periods, presumed to be reigns, ending with Alexander, the second of that name, whose death appears to have occurred in 1328.

About and somewhat before the last named date, one of the princes reputed to be a descendant of Vladimar, several generations removed, seems to have so far consolidated himself as to be a considerable power concentrated at Moscow, and had somehow acquired for himself the title of Grand Duke of the city and province of that name. This was Ivan, otherwise John, the First, and the founder of the line that was destined to restore Russia to its former unity. This Ivan, in common with his successors, had quite enough to do to contend with the Tartars from generation to generation, and the Tartars seem to have generally got the better of the contention; but the fourth successor of Ivan, who is known in history as Dimitri Ivanovitch, otherwise Demetrius III., made notable efforts to with-

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stand the common enemy about 1362. He contrived to organise an army of 200,000, which marched to the Don and gave the Tartars a thrashing, for which they retaliated by afterwards sacking Moscow.

In 1389 Demetrius died, and was succeeded by his son Vasilii, otherwise Basil III. In his time the notorious Timour the Tartar led another sack and slaughter at Moscow, from which was again carried off immense plunder. Afterwards there succeeded Basil IV. and then came Ivan III., who became Grand Duke of Moscow in 1462.

This extremely powerful ruler resorted to violence beyond all precedent, and by the terror of his name obtained great pre-eminence. He seems to have kept the Tartars at bay, and it is certain that he finally transferred the government at Novgorod to Moscow, and he appears in some of the records as the first Czar of Muscovy, and was crowned with a diadem which is still used for coronations in Russia.

In 1505 (two years before the accession of Henry VIII. of England) Ivan III. was succeeded by his son, Basil the Second, or Fifth, the records relative to his precise title being at variance. He had to withstand a renewed incursion of Tartars, who are said to have carried off 300,000 prisoners; but Basil afterwards managed so well that he united, under his own government, all the previously dismembered principalities.

Basil was succeeded, in 1533, by his son, who at that date was only three years old, but who afterwards grew up to be known as Ivan the Terrible. Availing himself in very early life of the unity of territory which his father had accomplished, he succeeded in driving out the Tartars and for a time putting them completely down. He afterwards extended the Russian dominions to the North and East of Asia, including Siberia; he also annexed Astracan. During these enterprises the Tartars again attacked Moscow, and it was set on fire. It burnt with such fury that the whole city was destroyed in six hours, and 120,000 citizens perished in the flames. Whether the conflagration was commenced by the besiegers or the besieged is matter for some doubt, but, there being no plunder left, the Tartars precipitately made off, on hearing that Ivan with his army was approaching.

In his home rule this Ivan was so extremely severe that it is said he punished one rebellion with 25,000 executions, yet, with all that, after the Russian manner, he sought to improve the condition of the

people, often in ways which they disapproved, and their resistance brought upon them fresh severities. It is said by some historians that he was the first Czar of Muscovy, though other records assign the first place to his ancestor Ivan III. In his declining years the Tartars again succeeded in an invasion, soon after which he died, in 1584, about the middle of the reign of Elizabeth of England, to which queen, it is asserted, he made serious proposals of marriage.

Anarchy succeeded the death of Ivan. His sons were unfitted for their rank, and their father's appointments with reference to the succession failed. Dimitri, one of the claimants to the throne, was supposed to be assassinated, and Feodor, who reigned, was poisoned in 1598. In him perished the last of the dynasty of Ruric, and so the throne, which Ivan III. had so terribly set up afresh, was vacant for lack of posterity in fourteen years.

Boris Gudonof, who is now supposed to have been a party in the poisoning of Feodor, convened an assembly of nobles, who elected him to the position of Czar. He is said to have tried to rule well, but totally failed. During his time there was a famine at Moscow in which parents ate their children and children their parents. This and other troubles drove the usurping Czar mad, and he poisoned himself. His sons were strangled, their murderer was killed in an insurrection; and during four attempts to reign, anarchy again prevailed, until Alexis occupied the throne, from 1645 to 1676. He left three sons, Feodor and Ivan by a first marriage and Peter by a second. Feodor succeeded till 1682, when he died, naming Peter as his successor. But Ivan and Peter were jointly at the nominal head of the Government till 1689, when Ivan died, and Peter then became Czar.

Peter, known as Peter the Great, was a little child when his father died, and attained to the sole possession of the throne at the age of seventeen. Like the most energetic of his predecessors, he assiduously cultivated the army in the old manner and set his mind upon the construction of a navy. He consequently worked as a shipwright, first at Archangel and afterwards at Amsterdam. Being invited by William III. to London, he availed himself of the opportunity to obtain further naval information, and is said to have worked in Deptford dockyard. A rebellion breaking out in his absence, he returned and suppressed it with all the rigour of his fiercest predecessors. He afterwards engaged in wars with Sweden and Turkey, and during the greater part of his reign he was

unostentatiously extending the limits of his dominions both in Europe and Asia, but he enjoyed comparative peace, during which he laid the foundations of St Petersburg, in 1703, and removed his government to that city.

But, perhaps, the most important step Peter took was the disestablishment of the patriarch, or primate, of Russia, and the assumption in his own person of the leadership of the Church, which office has been filled by all his successors, to the great consolidation of their power and influence, thus reviving the original tradition of political domination in religious affairs.

In his personal relationships, Peter was as peculiar as in other respects. There was a certain Catherine, said to have been the illegitimate daughter of a peasant, who became a wife, then a widow, then the mistress of a military officer, then the mistress of the emperor himself, and then his wife; and she was crowned empress accordingly, her husband having assumed or had accorded to him the title of Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias. In three years afterwards Peter died, in 1725.

Peter's will nominated his widow as his successor, and she was again crowned as Catherine I. Whatever else may be said about her, she must have possessed extraordinary ability, for, while the nobles submitted to her, she secured the love and veneration of the people by her benignant and gentle government. She reduced the capitation tax; ordered Peter's gibbets to be cut down; recalled exiles from Siberia; paid the arrears due to the army; and restored privileges. A Georgian prince spontaneously submitted to her, and Tartars voluntarily did her homage. There was consequently a peaceful increase of territory, previously to her death, which occurred on the 17th of May, 1727. She nominated as her successor a grandson of her late husband, who became Peter II. at the age of twelve. According to some accounts he was deposed, but it is also said that he was the nominal Czar till he died of smallpox in 1730.

Again the succession was at the disposal of the nobles. Peter the Great's male issue was extinct, in anticipation of which contingency Peter and Catherine had appointed the Duke of Holstein (son of Peter's eldest daughter) to succeed to the throne; but the nobles set the appointment aside, and nominated Anne, Duchess of Courland, and granddaughter of Peter's eldest brother, though her elder sister was living. Anne consequently became empress upon condi-

tions which she afterwards set at defiance, and punished those who had imposed them upon her. After wars in Poland and Turkey and the taking of the capital of Moldavia, Anne died, in 1740.

Ivan VI., though only two years old, was nominated by Anne to succeed her, her favourite Biren being appointed his guardian. This Ivan was a grand-nephew of Peter the Great, but was in no sense entitled to priority. Biren, being extremely unpopular, was banished to Siberia, and Ivan and his parents were imprisoned. Ivan is said to have been in captivity for eighteen years, when he was killed while endeavouring to escape. Elizabeth, a daughter of Peter the Great, who superseded Ivan VI., died of excessive drinking, in 1762.

Peter III., who succeeded Elizabeth by her nomination, was the grandson of the Duke of Holstein, whom the nobles had previously ignored in favour of Anne. This Peter was destined to be the victim of one of the most fearful tragedies on record. He was of very inferior capacity, delighted in buffoonery, merry-andrews, and the singing of coarse songs, while he spoke of the army with contempt, ordered the clergy to cut off their beards, and otherwise abused his position. Previously to his accession he had married Sophia Augusta Fredrica (otherwise better known also by the name of Catherine), daughter of a Prince of Anhalt; but he afterwards became enamoured of another lady of some rank, his illicit connection with whom became known to his wife, who was remarkably beautiful, accomplished, and well informed. While she charmed the Court with her numerous engaging qualities, and devoted her abilities to the task of devising a new code of laws for the empire, he idled away his time in frivolous or debasing amusements.

The breach between them became more marked and notorious. As the emperor's disgrace deepened, the empress's popularity increased. He sought to get her imprisoned; and, his design becoming known to her, she got him imprisoned instead; not in a dungeon, but in a pleasant retreat, from which he sent a message to her, requesting that she would let him have his dog, his Bible, and some romances. His request was treated with contempt. A party of military officers, shielded under the pretence of paying him a friendly visit, dined with him and contrived to poison his wine. Perceiving at the first draught what was being attempted, he called for milk as an antidote, but they pressed him to drink more wine, which he refused to do. A struggle ensued in which he was struck

down and strangled with a napkin. Whether the empress was an accessory before the fact is not on record, but that she was after the fact there can be no doubt. With her concurrence it was given out that he had died of hæmorrhoidal colic, and his body was publicly shown to thousands of eager spectators at St. Petersburg, with the face exposed and black and the neck excoriated. Thus was he disposed of after being emperor only six months.

Catherine II., thus widowed, notwithstanding all that was known and more that was suspected, was gladly hailed as empress, for the remarkably superior parts of her character had become fully known. She was magnanimous towards her former opponents, reinstated Biren, established her code of laws, created viceroynalties, introduced public schools, repaired roads, and promoted improvements of every description. In the military department, after confirming a peace with Prussia, she made war twice upon Turkey and once upon Sweden, annexed Georgia, and invaded Persia. But her most notable work in the military world was her participation in the partition of Poland, in 1795, in which year she also made a defensive alliance with England, and died the following year, on the 9th of November.

Paul, the son of Catherine, succeeded his mother, but, becoming deranged, he was conspired against and strangled with the scarf of an officer in 1801.

Alexander I., the eldest son of Paul, is suspected of complicity in the murder of his father, as he is not known to have sought to punish the assassins. Whether he was guilty of that crime or not, he is otherwise reputed to have been of a most amiable disposition. He relaxed customs, suppressed the Secret Inquisition, released prisoners, recalled from exile, established the University of Lithuania, emancipated Jews, and promoted voyages of discovery. His reign commenced in the heat of the Napoleonic wars; and Russia, besides taking active part in that prolonged conflict, in various parts of Europe, had to bear the brunt of the tremendous French invasion, which ended with the second great burning of Moscow and the destruction of the French army. Though concerned in a slight rupture with England, he was usually in alliance, especially against France. He was at war with Turkey and also with Sweden, but acquired no new territory or very little. He died on the 1st of December, 1825.

Constantine, the second son of Paul, was proclaimed successor



CATHERINE II.

to Alexander, but he had already resigned his claim to the crown in 1822. The will of Alexander also nominated his younger brother Nicholas, who hence became emperor. An insurrection ensued, but it was easily suppressed. Compared to most of his predecessors, Nicholas was an inoffensive and peaceful sovereign. In so far as he was otherwise in general is of little account, as the absorbing period of his reign for Englishmen was that of his attempt to encroach upon and partition Turkey, and the consequent involvement of England, in alliance with France, in the Crimean War, concerning which it here suffices to note that it began on March 28, 1854, and ended in April, 1856, with the victory of the allies and defeat of Russia. During the war Nicholas died, on the 2nd of March, 1855.

Alexander II., the son of Nicholas, succeeded to the throne. The events of his reign come especially within the review of the recent progress of Russia towards India, which demands detailed treatment in a subsequent chapter. It completes the foregoing chronology to add that this emperor was assassinated at St. Petersburg on the 13th of March, 1881, and that he was succeeded by the present emperor, Alexander III., who now rules over a territory of about *nine millions of square miles* (ten times the area of India and 178 times that of England), with a population exceeding *sixty millions*, and a standing army of about *five hundred thousand*.

Looking back at our historical sketch, we may perhaps arrive at the comprehensive conviction that the rulers of so vast a territory, and the people over whom they rule—who have become, as we have seen, inured to warfare in its most prolonged and terrible forms; who have braved fire and sword, rebellion and massacre, treachery and assassination, from their very earliest history down to the present decade—are not likely to be very squeamish about another war, or two or three wars, more or less, whatever the circumstances and however strong their antagonists may be. And though none of us who are worthy of our heritage would shrink from facing the ordeal, should it of necessity be imposed upon us, it is wholesome discipline to take care that we appreciate in its fullest sense the gravity of the reflection that it is no light matter to suffer ourselves to be provoked into a military contest—though so jauntily regarded by too many—with a power possessing such vast resources which, in peace or war, for good or for evil, it is our manifest destiny to cope with.

CHAPTER IV.

AFGHANISTAN, THE BONE OF CONTENTION.

THROUGHOUT the recorded history of India, whether antecedent to the arrival of modern Europeans or since, nothing is more notable than the prominence and frequency with which Afghans took part throughout the extremest limits of the peninsula, in the fiercest and most prolonged wars, as well as in the formation and maintenance of some of the strongest and most enduring governments. Hence we get evidence of the existence of a peculiar and remarkable people, who have for a long time played a conspicuous part in that quarter of the world.

It seems extremely likely that the stubbornest instances of opposition, which had to be encountered by the British forces in their later years of conquest, arose from scattered detachments of the same race, or were instigated by what remained of them as long as they were able to infuse a modicum of their implacable spirit into the less martial Hindus; and it is equally likely that the last remnants of resistance that have burst out afresh at intervals in recent times have arisen from a like source.

Submission being the last thing that an Afghan would entertain an idea of, it seems evident that as British arms prevailed in India, and British rule approached consolidation there, almost all the veritable Afghans who survived, bent upon escaping from the dreaded thralldom of civilisation, more or less gradually retired before the European wave, and sought security afresh amongst their kindred who had never left the ancient refuge of their ancestors, having for their companions on their way a vagrant and turbulent sprinkling of other races, who, being some of them in debt, or otherwise, for obvious reasons, in distress and discontented with the turn events were taking, thus converted Afghanistan into a very Cave of Adullam, where, unmolested by the further interference of their conquerors, they obtained the desired liberty to settle their own little differences amongst themselves, according to their own barbarous fashion.

Nothing could be more appropriate; for the country they retired to was, and is, as peculiar as the people, and the people were, and are, the most peculiar on the face of the earth, appealing to their traditions as evidence that they are the lost and last tribe of the Children of Israel, claiming to be descended from King Saul, one of whose numerous grandsons was, as they allege, named Afghana. They further allege that the major part of the descendants of Afghana were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon with the rest of the Israelites, and that, instead of subsequently returning to Jerusalem, as the majority of their brethren did, the Afghans made their way through Persia, and so arrived at their new Canaan, which, having consequently become known as Afghanistan, has been their home ever since.

These claims to very extraordinary and romantic antecedents seem to be sustained by several personal characteristics that are well worthy of consideration. A large proportion of the Afghans have a strongly Jewish cast of features, the women being described as finely developed, very fair, and handsome. Upon the whole, they are an unruly and intractable people, in perfect correspondence with the "stiff-necked" multitude that gave Moses and his successors such an infinity of trouble to the last. They stand by the exclusive possession of the land they live in with a jealousy and tenacity without a parallel in modern times. They have at every period, even until the present day, evinced an unscrupulous readiness to acquire and appropriate to their own use the possessions and property of all sorts and conditions of gentiles on every occasion most favourable for such enterprises.

As if all these surroundings and conditions were not peculiar enough, they have capped them all by adopting the religion of Islam. According to their traditions, they heard of Mahomet within ten years after his inspiration, and sent messengers to learn all they could about him. The particulars of his faith were so completely in accordance with their taste that they hastened to be enrolled amongst the first of his disciples, and they still adhere to their own interpretation of his teachings with a strictness and fanaticism unsurpassed in any other part of the world.

Consequent upon the religious exclusiveness so intensely cultivated, intellectual accomplishments are entirely under the control of the moollahs (priests). Compulsory education by these functionaries is the rule, but it is for the most part limited to prayers and

selections from the Koran; reading and writing, with other elements of knowledge, being reserved for the moollahs and persons who are rich enough to secure their services as private tutors. As a natural result, the moollahs are treated with extreme reverence, an insult to one of them being a most serious offence. They control not only the whole people, but officers and governors, and the Ameer himself is, in a great measure, under their influence.

In addition to the Afghans, however, though they largely predominate, there are considerable numbers of other races living in almost every part of the country, some being of exceedingly mixed and indefinite descent, while others are of more decided types of humanity. Very uncomfortable examples of the former are the Guilzais, who are simply wild men of the mountains, living in caves and subsisting upon plunder. Conspicuous amongst the latter are Hindus; and though it is said that personal recognition of the difference between the races and religions is so strong that an Afghan will not eat meat prepared by a Hindu, yet, in other respects, the presence of the Hindus is quietly tolerated, and the exercise of their religion permitted, though the exhibition of their idols and their appearance in religious processions is not allowed in public. Of the rest of the mixed races, a considerable proportion are nomads, many of them relying upon murder and robbery for a living—outlaws even in that almost lawless country. Striking exceptions to the nondescript character of the races are the people known as Tajiks, perhaps more usually called Sariks, who are described as athletic, peacefully disposed, desirous of cultivating the soil with assiduity, free from the turbulent spirit of the Afghans and wilder races, generally fair, and otherwise distinguished by their language, which is a dialect of Persian, that being but one of many varieties of languages resorted to within the territory claimed by the Afghans.

As for the government of that territory there is none in any sense understood amongst us. The primitive idea of tribes, each tribe with a chief (known by the name of sirdar) of its own, prevails to a considerable extent, but what relationship each chief has to the head of the government is not clear. Revenue, in any legitimate sense, is unknown, or is very insignificant, as it is one of the impracticable infatuations of the Afghan to regard compulsory taxation to the smallest amount as an unqualified outrage. It is, indeed, hard to imagine how any reliable army can be organised or main-

tained, or any public expenses met, and there have been few opportunities of learning by what means any bond of unity is maintained. Whatever there is seems to be solely of a religious character, under the control of the moollahs, between whom and the nominal headship of authority supposed to be concentrated in the Ameer, there seems to be a rough recognition of mutual interests, in maintaining and respecting their several offices, which in a more definite and direct manner exists between the Church and the State in most of the countries of Europe. Whether there is really unity of sentiment amongst the Afghans themselves, and for their own internal advantage, it is certain that they are united, if in nothing else, in their intense abhorrence of the interference of strangers, and in their implacable resistance to the invasion of foreigners of whatever country, whether peaceful or not.

In such conditions, with no written laws, no appeal against arbitrary power, and no means of qualifying despotism at its worst, there were sure to be abundant occasions when exasperated resistance to oppression or ambitious personal jealousy must prevail against the head of the government, whenever it was exceptionally weak or overbearing. Accordingly, the history of Afghanistan, so far as there are reliable records, has been one long course of almost unbroken contention for the supreme position filled by the Khan, Shah, or Ameer. This history is, indeed, inextricably mixed up with the incursions by Afghans into India, and their conquests there, incited by the military spirit infused into them when their religion was exercising its early influence 600 years ago; but for all useful purposes it suffices to go back only as far as 1525, when we learn that one Baber reigned at Cabul. At his death anarchy ensued, and there was a partition of the country between Persia and Hindustan. In 1738 the Afghans again asserted their independence, invaded Persia and took Ispahan, but Nadir Shah subsequently beat them back and recovered Candahar and Cabul, where he was assassinated in 1747. From that date the career of modern Afghanistan may be said to commence.

Then, as now, assassination seems to have been looked upon at Cabul as a short and easy method with strangers who persist in attempting to interfere in Afghan politics.

On the death of Nadir, an assembly of sirdars at Candahar elected Ahmed, an Afghan, who had been an officer of the army in Persia, and he became Ahmed Shah. His military ability was so great that

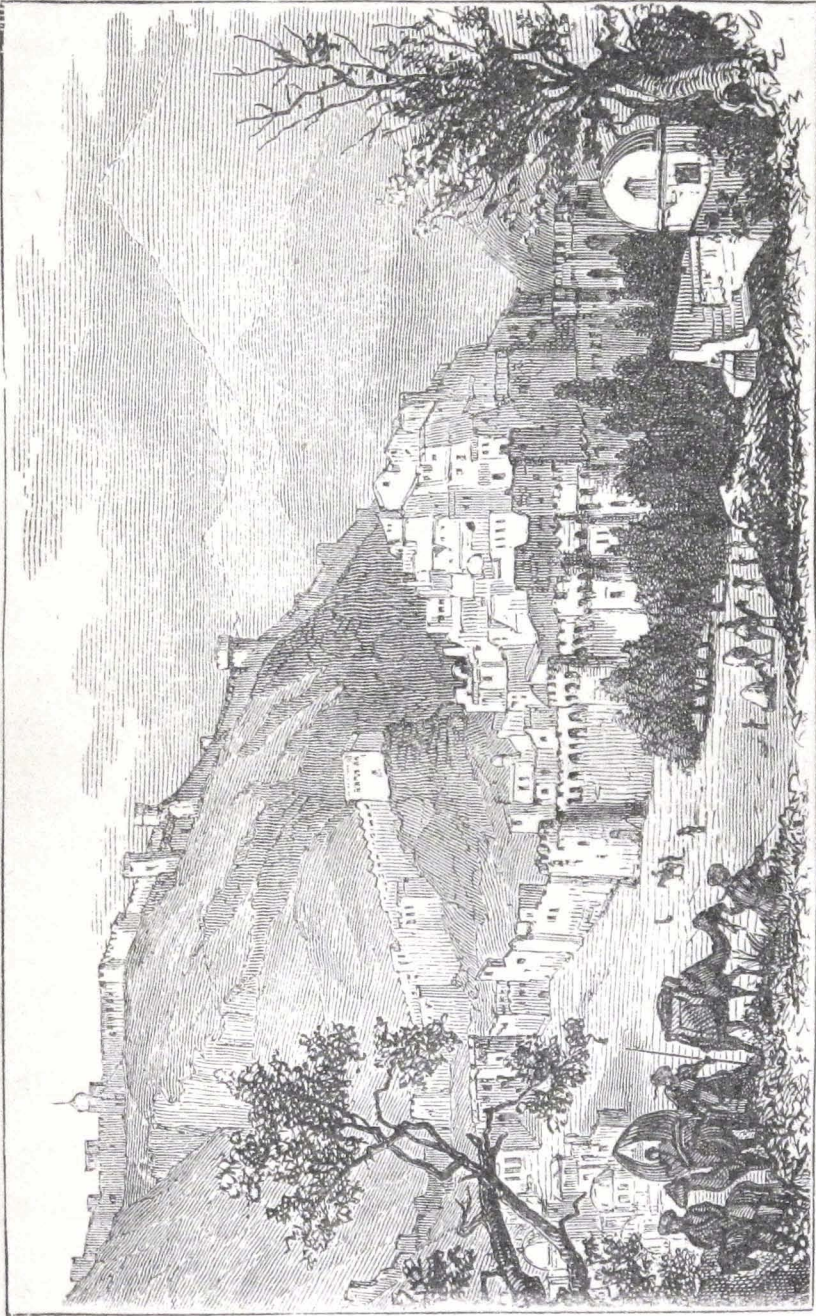
he made expeditions as far as the Caspian to the east, and against the Mahrattas in the south. He was uniformly victorious, and concentrated under his government the whole of Afghanistan and Cabul, the Punjab, Cashmir, and Turkestan, while Sinde, Beloochistan and Khorassan were his tributaries. He died in 1773.

Timur (apparently named after the earlier Timour the Great), the son of Ahmed, became Timur Khan. He transferred the government from Candahar to Cabul, and from there governed successfully with cruel severity for 20 years, when he died, in 1793.

Anarchy ensued in consequence of Timur leaving twenty-three sons, who contended for the government. During this time the Punjab, Cashmir, and Turkestan, were totally dissevered, and so the territory was reduced to what is familiarly known as the Afghanistan of to-day, which, in this place appropriately demands more particular notice.

Afghanistan, roughly speaking, consists of six provinces:—Cabul, Jelalabad, Ghuzni, Candahar, Herat, and Afghan Turkestan. Each province, except the last, has a city of its own name for its capital. On the maps of fifty years ago, the southern provinces are expressly and separately distinguished as forming Afghanistan, with Candahar, otherwise Kandahar, as its chief city. The northern part then appeared as Cabool or Cabul, with its chief city and river of the same name. The north western corner then showed the city and province of Herat, as now, with the notable peculiarity that the name of Khorassan extended from half way across the north of Persia to the east of Herat, thus denoting that geographers of about that time were in some doubt whether to include the district and city of Herat in Persia or Cabul, it being an open question whether the invasions and counter invasions of each country had determined to which Herat really belonged. The doubt which evidently prevailed then is at the bottom of the boundary controversy now.

As thus described, Afghanistan, including Cabul, Herat and Afghan Turkestan, measures about a mean of 500 miles from north to south, and 600 miles from east to west, so that the area is probably about 300,000 square miles (roundly speaking, six times as big as England). It is bounded on the west by Persia; on the north by the river Oxus, the country known as Bokhara, and the Turkoman wilds; on the east by the Punjab, and on the south by Beloochistan. The last named is the most notable boundary, because it totally cuts off all communication between Afghanistan and the sea, and,



CABUL.

with all their love of aggression and encroachment in years past, there is no record that the Afghans ever attempted or desired to gain access to any harbour or port on the coast, so as to enable them to engage in maritime operations. This, indeed, is additional evidence that their claim to Hebrew origin is well founded, as they thus exhibit, in common with the generality of Jews, all over the world, a disposition to avoid the dangers of the deep, which has been conspicuously manifested by an evident tendency of Hebrew idiosyncrasy to indulge in lugubrious sentiments upon contemplation of the "melancholy ocean."

The country of the Afghans is also totally cut off from the sea in another sense. Nowhere else in the whole world is there within the like radius an equal extent of habitable surface at so high an elevation. The general character of the entire country is extremely mountainous and excessively broken up. The ranges and peaks are everywhere very high, rising on the upper reaches of the Cabul river to 21,000 feet. Of course the habitable parts are in the valleys and plains, which are comparatively low, but, low as they may appear when seen on the spot, it is calculated that, though the sea rose four thousand feet, only the lower valley of the river near Herat, some tracts near the Indus, and near Lake Seistan, would be submerged, and that probably more than nine-tenths of the inhabitants would not be encroached upon. Some idea of what this implies may be gathered from the fact that if the sea around the British Isles were to rise to the extent named, nothing would appear above the surface of the water but a small piece of the top of Ben Nevis and perhaps also a bit of Ben MacDhu.

The amazing elevation of nearly the whole of Afghanistan results, amongst other things, in a climate of which there is no example elsewhere to anything like the same extent. In the winter, exposure to winds and the rarity of the atmosphere at such heights produces cold of arctic intensity. At Cabul the rigour is so great that the people seldom leave their houses and sleep close to stoves. At Ghuzni the snow remains long after March, the thermometer is sometimes 15 degrees below zero, and the population have been entirely overwhelmed with snow more than once. This kind of thing prevails in almost every part of the country except at and around Jelalabad where there is almost an Indian climate. There are also other favoured spots where exceptional mildness is

general, but it is not safe to rely upon limited observation, as it is said that, whereas in some spots snow never falls, it may be that within two hours' journey (and a slow journey too) snow never melts. For instance, something like this is experienced in and about Herat, where the winter is generally so mild that snow seldom falls, but, quite near there, Ahmed Shah, on his retreat from Persia in 1750, before referred to, lost 18,000 men from cold in one night. Similar evidence is derived from a ministerial statement made in the House of Commons on the 16th of April, 1885, to the effect that earlier in the same month, within some sixty or seventy miles of Herat, where the winter is said to be so mild, there was regrettable loss of life among the camp followers owing to a snowstorm, and this some ten or twelve days after the vernal equinox.

In summer the climate runs to the other extreme. The mean latitude being about 32 (20 degrees further south than London, and about the same as Lower Egypt) the power of the sun's rays is immense, gaining accumulated effect from the circumstance that the sky is mostly cloudless day and night. The configuration of the rocks is such in many places that they absorb heat by day and radiate it by night, and the combined result is that at elevations which in most other countries would be perpetually covered with snow, the heat is desperately oppressive, and the effect of this is felt almost everywhere. The universality of it may be gathered from the fact that we are gravely informed concerning Herat, that its climate is most agreeable and free from extremes, not only in winter but in summer, when the maximum range is only 98° and rarely more than 91°. To render this prevalence of excessive heat all the more trying, the cold throughout most parts of the country at night, even in the summer, is severe, and it is not considered safe, in July, to sleep at Cabul without being wrapped in a sheepskin.

Even the natives are not sufficiently acclimatised to resist the pernicious consequences of such extremes. Fevers and bowel complaints are common and very fatal. Rheumatism and neuralgia extensively prevail, as well as severe affections of the eyes. Other diseases of a more than usually loathsome character are very general, but they can scarcely be ascribed to the peculiarities of the climate.

At some extremely high elevations, from 6,000 to 10,000 feet, there are grand forests of gigantic pines and other hardy timber, and at

less elevations there is a great variety of trees such as are common in European and semi-tropical countries. Underwood is also various, luxuriant and beautiful, laburnum and rhododendron being mentioned as peculiarly rich. But in other districts both mountains and plains are totally destitute of any vegetation whatever, and present to the eye, for many miles, scenes of the most depressing desolation.

Wherever there is sufficient depth of soil, however, as in almost all other countries where there is much snow, fertility is very great. All the European flowers and fruits grow to perfection, and most of the semi-tropical ones. Melons are splendid and the yield of grapes is not surpassed anywhere either for quantity or quality. Some silk is produced, famous tobacco is grown to advantage, and sugar-canes are raised. All the cereals flourish well and yield two harvests each year, wheat in abundant crops furnishing the staple food of the people. Cattle seem to be chiefly valued for their dairy produce, as we find no special reference to systematic consumption of flesh-meat, though there are numerous flocks of sheep, possibly most valued for their wool.

It is supposed that there is vast mineral and metallic wealth, but it is little developed, though some very superior iron is produced from a peculiar sand, and a little of some other metals. Gold is occasionally found in the streams, water being generally plentiful in most directions. Spinning and weaving of silk and wool are successfully carried on, and the cloth and carpets are of the highest class.

But the great check upon the industry and trade of the country is the lack of roads. With few and rare and brief exceptions mere tracks that have been resorted to for centuries are the only means of communication, for the rivers are generally not navigable. The beaten tracks are mostly rough to excess, so that wheeled vehicles cannot be resorted to. Remedy for the roughness seems to be hopeless in consequence of the torrents of rain which descend in prodigious quantities for considerable periods occurring twice every year. To the inferiority of the best of the roads is added the difficulty of crossing streams, fords being resorted to for this purpose. The lowest ford of the Cabul river is only passable at the driest season, while many other streams are impassable for considerable portions of the year. The toil and cost of a journey is also immensely increased by the exceeding steepness of the tracks that must neces-

sarily be traversed, and to this form of difficulty is added the absolute impassability of some of the mountains for many miles, as they can only be got through where there are natural passes or clefts, and some of those are so shallow and afford such slight facilities as to be almost insurmountable. For instance, the Kushan Pass, which has to be adopted with considerable frequency, is itself 15,000 feet above the level of the sea, while the elevation of the bottom of the noted valley (!) of the Kashkar is from 6000 to 11,000 feet.

Exceptional feats of riding are sometimes performed upon native horses, which are very superior, but camels are commonly used for the conveyance of goods, what few there are to convey. Though the traveller may be in every respect well equipped for a journey, there are still to be encountered a variety of dangers. Numerous robbers are constantly on the watch. There are no venomous reptiles, or extremely few, and no elephants or lions, but there are tigers and leopards that are liable to appear at any moment, also hyænas and wolves, the latter, as elsewhere, collecting in packs, and creating terrible risks for travellers who are not in large parties. The animals enumerated share the forests and the wilds with bears, wild dogs, sheep, and hogs, foxes, monkeys, hawks and eagles. Upon the whole, most of these are not only embarrassments and perils to travellers, but destructive to large numbers of sheep and cattle, and they not infrequently invade the homes of the people. The extent to which the natives are inured to dangers of this kind may be judged of from the custom amongst young men of rivalling each other in entering the dens of hyænas, and there muffling and binding them for sport.

Some of the few Europeans who have been received as guests have painted in glowing colours the magnificence of the scenery, the grandeur of the forests, the brilliancy of the verdure, and the charming prospects of orchards, villages and castles, grouped together for miles along the banks of the streams, and throughout valleys farther than the eye can reach, while they descant upon the bounteous fertility which casts plenty into the laps of the inhabitants. But it is also well ascertained that these are exceptional circumstances in summer, in the most favoured spots and tracts. It has to be borne in mind that such charms are mostly apt to be dissipated by intense heats beyond ordinary endurance, and that the winter, extending over more than half the year, obliterates with its grim rigours the best features of the brightest prospects. More

than all, the greatest obstacle to the better development of the inhabitants are the rugged obstacles to travel, which for the most part cut off communication between one inhabited locality and another, and still more from the outer world; leaving the majority of the population in the perpetual darkness of their primeval ignorance; without knowledge, or books, or newspapers, or mental occupation of any kind, whereby they are, as it were, buried in a monotony of personal existence, from which a lawless raid or vengeful warfare, notwithstanding all its endurances, sufferings and death, is a welcome relief.

Such is the country, and such is the people that have unwittingly become the bone of contention between the two greatest empires of the earth. Most assuredly not for their own sakes is so much interest felt in them; but, apart from the wonders of their geology, it is their exceptional geographical position that infuses into them a political importance much more than commensurate with their merits. With the details of that political importance, and the complications it has involved, it is our next duty to deal.

CHAPTER V.

POLITICAL COMPLICATIONS CONCERNING THE AFGHAN COUNTRY AND PEOPLE.

IT is advantageous in this place to bear in mind that the whole of the Indian peninsula, including the three presidencies of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, is now either under the direct Government of England, or tributary thereto or in treaty alliance therewith; in addition to which, outlying states are also directly or indirectly under English control, as thus enumerated.

1816, Nepal ratified a treaty of alliance.

1825, Assam acquired.

1826, Aracan, or Lower Burmah, annexed.

1843, Sindh annexed.

1849, Punjab annexed.

1856, Oude annexed.

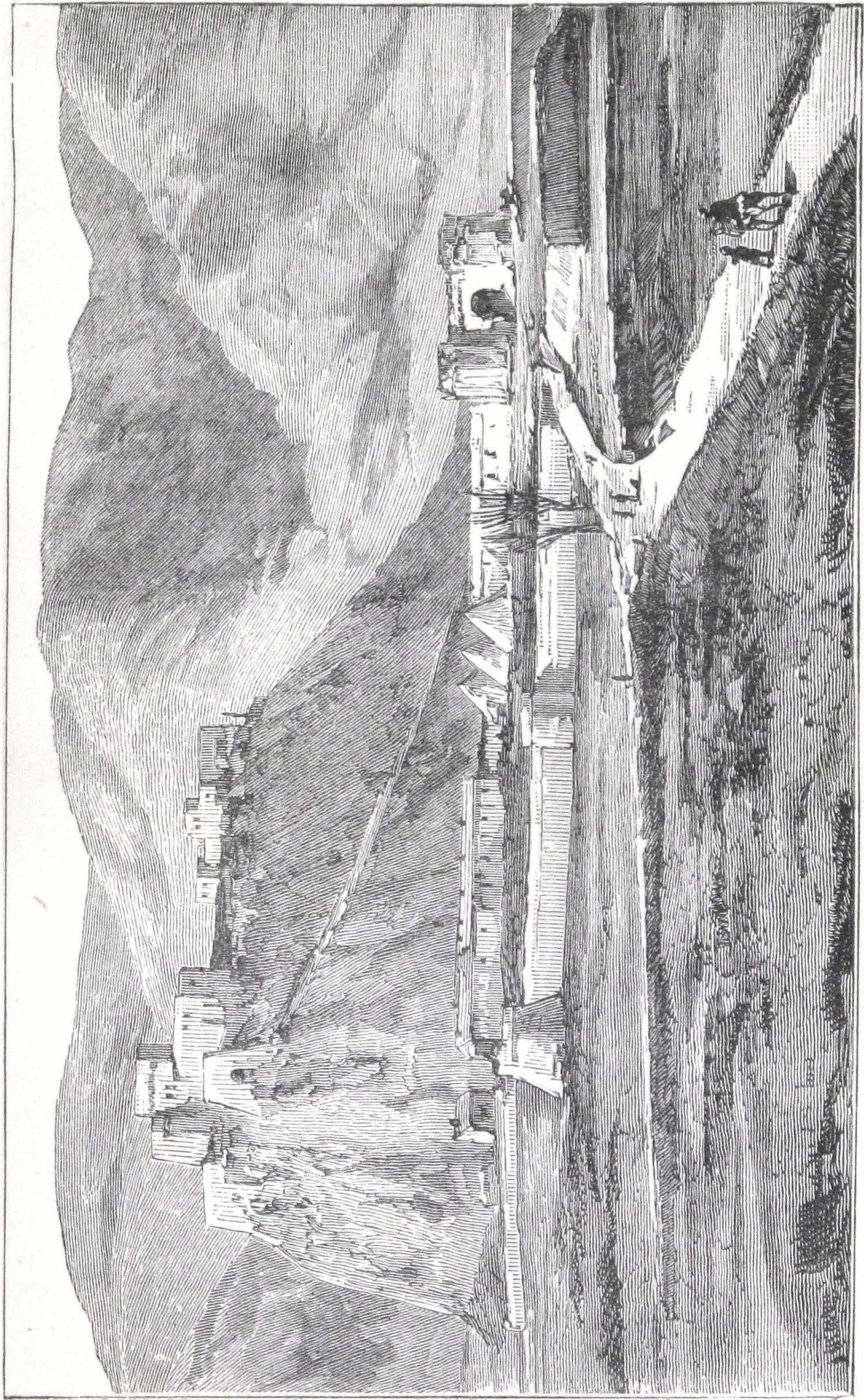
1875, Burmah (Upper) made treaty of alliance.

1875, Beloochistan made treaty of alliance, and Quetta became a British settlement.

These things were not accomplished without the vigorous exercise of great military power, and they have not been maintained without having to contend with resistance and mutinies that have not been put down without immense sacrifices of life and treasure. The broad outcome is, that the provinces of India and its border states are at the present moment all under the direct or indirect control of England, with one exception.

Afghanistan, as described in the previous chapter, is the exception. Diplomacy and force, separate and combined, have hitherto failed to accomplish there what has been accomplished so completely in other directions. For the reasons before described, both country and people have proved utterly impracticable.

The inconvenience of this difficulty has been the more keenly felt, because Afghanistan lies directly between our Indian possessions and territories that have long been regarded as the necessary fields for Russian enterprise and conquest. It has been perceived that if Russia ultimately became possessed of the country, or



QUETTA.

became on cordial terms of amity and alliance with its rulers and people, Russia would be in a position to convert the position into a base of operations from which strong military expeditions might descend upon India at great disadvantage to the latter.

The first English attempts to reconcile or subdue the Afghan people, however, were consequent upon the intrigues of Napoleon in Persia in 1809. That was during the anarchy referred to in the previous chapter arising out of the contentions amongst the twenty-three sons of Timur. As far as can be made out, one of those sons, named Zemah, became, or pretended to be, Ameer in 1793; but as he attempted to cripple the power of the sirdars, they conspired against him, blinded and dethroned him in 1800. Mahmud Shah succeeded, but he also was dethroned in 1803, in favour of Suja Shah.

It was in his time that the before mentioned first effort on England was made in 1809. The Hon. Mountstewart Elphinstone was sent by previous arrangement as envoy to Afghanistan, and met Suja Shah at Peshawur. It is said that it was the first meeting of an Englishman with an Afghan on Afghan ground. The interview was considered to be a success, and it was expected that it would be made the beginning of a permanent friendly footing for England; but it proved to be the very reverse.

Subsequent experience serves to interpret the actual consequences. The Afghans, especially the sirdars, entertained then as now an incurable jealousy of the intrusion of foreigners, and it is probable they considered that Suja Shah, in according the interview, was evincing a willingness to treat their desires with contempt, or that the Shah sought to betray them for his own advantage. A rising at Cabul immediately followed. Suja fled into India, and Mahmud was restored. His favourite vizier, Futtih Khan, having excited anew the jealousy of the sirdars, was seized and blinded in 1816. Mahmud, escaping from Cabul, established himself at Herat, from which time that city and province becomes a conspicuous element in subsequent events, as Mahmud Shah seems to have carried on a government there, quite independently of Cabul.

Meanwhile, there was great confusion at Cabul, of which we can scarcely more than guess the particulars. It can only be supposed that the sirdars contended among themselves for the mastery, setting up first one nominal ruler and then another, all failing to fill the position for any length of time, until, after ten years of

anarchy, they elected Dost Mahommed, in 1826. He established a rule of exceptional duration, and it was the destiny of that Ameer to play a very prominent part in subsequent politics.

In 1837 (the first year of the reign of Queen Victoria), in consequence of the proceedings of Russia exciting suspicion, and the siege of Herat by Persia creating uneasiness in England and India, there was another attempt to arrive at a friendly understanding



DOST MAHOMMED.

with Afghanistan. The siege of Herat failed, and the Persians retired under treaty with England; but, acting upon resolutions previously arrived at, the Governor General of India despatched Sir Alexander Burnes to Cabul, it being intended that he should become the British representative or resident there. The negotiations to that effect failed. Dost Mahommed (no doubt under the compulsion of the sirdars) refused to be a party to the arrangement, and the government of Lord Melbourne, then in power, with Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary, committed the amazing folly of attempting to dethrone him in favour of Suja Shah, who had remained in India ever since his flight there in 1809.



KHYBER PASS

Accordingly, the army of the Indus was organised for a military expedition to Cabul. Candahar was taken in April, 1839, and Suja Shah was immediately crowned there, in his grandfather's mosque. On the 21st of July, Ghuzni was taken by storm, and Dost Mahommed then fled from Cabul, and the British army soon afterwards entered that city, and placed Suja at the head of affairs, Sir W. Macnaughton acting as resident, with Sir A. Burnes as his colleague. Dost Mahommed surrendered to the British in November, 1840, was taken to India and well treated, and it was supposed that the object of the British Government had been attained. It was quite the reverse.

A considerable part of the British army retired into India, but a force of 8,000 men remained, which, together with Suja's own supporters, was believed to be sufficient. It was not so. On the 2nd of November, 1841, an insurrection at Cabul, of great magnitude, was so successful as to become irresistible. Burnes and other Englishmen were murdered, and the British troops (with whom was Sir W. Macnaughton) had as much as they could do to hold their own in their military quarters. On the 23rd of December, the heads of the insurrection invited Sir W. Macnaughton to a conference, at which he was murdered by Akbar Khan, a son of Dost Mahommed. By this time the British force was reduced to less than 4,000 men. The superior officers, being menaced by greatly superior numbers, were forced into signing a treaty of evacuation, and, in the middle of the terrible winter of that extreme climate, the whole marched out on the 6th of January, leaving behind Lady Sale and numerous other English prisoners, happily for them.

Amongst the whole British force, and 12,000 camp followers, who thus left Cabul, it is said that only twenty muskets were left on January 13, and only Dr. Brydone and four or five camp followers ever reached India. All the rest perished. The explanation that was then accepted in England (and which has commonly survived until this day) was that those who were lost were massacred by Guilzais in the Khyber Pass. No doubt many of them were, but it is much more likely that most of them succumbed to the desperate cold to which they were exposed, concerning which there was then, and still is, very prevalent ignorance in England.

At or soon after the evacuation of Cabul, Suja was assassinated. Ghuzni was surrendered to a similar insurrection there on the 10th

of December, but Gen. Nott continued to hold Canahar, and Gen. Sale held Jelalabad. Another army was placed under the command of Gen. Pollock, who, after forcing the Khyber Pass in the face of determined resistance, relieved Jelalabad on April 16, 1842. After encountering innumerable difficulties arising out of the character of the country and climate, he arrived before Cabul on the 15th of September. Gen. Nott, having quelled the insurrection at Candahar, and taken Ghuzni, also arrived before Cabul on the 17th, and the united British forces possessed themselves of Cabul, released Lady Sale (whose peril and sufferings had aroused the warmest solicitude in England) and 94 other prisoners, destroyed the citadel and central bazaar, and were in a position to remain if it had been judged desirable to do so. But the unique difficulties, caused by the rugged and inclement nature of the country and the implacable ferocity and treachery of its people, deterred both the military and civil authorities from making any further attempt at subjection or alliance. The possession of Cabul was voluntarily relinquished, the other cities were abandoned, and, by the end of the year there was not an English foot remaining upon Afghan territory.

The detention of Dost Mahommed being considered more trouble than he was worth, he was allowed to leave India whenever he chose, and he resumed his position as Ameer before the British army had quitted the country. Thus, the objects of the English and Indian government of that time were totally defeated in every particular. Dost Mahommed reigned in greater security and power than ever, and Akbar Khan was rewarded for his treacherous murder of Macnaughton by being made vazi; but he died in 1848. In that year Dost Mahommed took active part against the British forces during the Sikh revolt, captured Attok, joined the Sikhs in the battle of Guzerat, and, participating in their defeat, narrowly escaped capture. Probably acting upon the recollection of his fears on that occasion, he, in January, 1855, was in a better mood for negotiation than he had previously been. The consequence was that he entered into the treaty of Peshawur, between himself and Lord Dalhousie. In December of the same year he recovered possession of Candahar.

Herat now comes prominently to the front. In 1856 that city was captured by a Persian army, in disregard of the treaty with England. There was another treaty guaranteeing Dost Mahommed

against Persia, and a British mission, headed by Major (subsequently Sir Peter) Lumsden, was received at Candahar, retiring from there in 1858. These friendly associations induced Dost Mahommed to refrain from taking part against the British during the mutiny in Bengal. In consequence of the capture of Herat by Persia there was a war between England and that country, which terminated with the relinquishment of Herat in 1857, but it does not appear that it was then restored to Dost Mahommed, for he had to capture it on May 26th, 1863, and he died there thirteen days afterwards. All the evidence seems to show that, from the flight of Mahmud from Cabul, in 1816, and his establishment then at Herat, the possession and government of Cabul and Herat were quite distinct until this recovery of Herat in 1863, and the question naturally arises whether the ruler of Cabul had any title at that time to assume the government of Herat. It seems only reasonable to conclude that the government of Herat has been usurped ever since, and that the pretensions put forward by the usurpers with reference to the boundaries of the province are void for lack of properly constituted authority.

Dost Mahommed left thirteen sons, the third, Shere Ali Khan, being nominated by the will of his father as his successor. He succeeded accordingly, but was hotly opposed by his brothers and nephews who, after numerous conspiracies and battles, got possession of most of the country, except Herat, and for a time exercised supreme authority at Cabul; but Shere Ali entered that city triumphantly in 1868, and then became comparatively secure in his position as Ameer. In 1869, he was received and entertained by the Governor General of India, the Earl of Mayo, at Umballah, when an arrangement was made to pay him a subsidy in consideration of his alliance. In 1870, his son (a model Afghan of the most turbulent kind) named Yakoob, rebelled against his father, and captured Herat on the 6th of May. It seems probable that he, backed by discontented sirdars, did this in retaliation upon his father for having exhibited suspicious friendliness towards the English. Probably it was for a similar motive that the father's general was assassinated the following year. The same motive is also very apparent in the character of further disputes between Shere Ali and Yakoob, particulars of which are reserved for a later chapter in due course.

CHAPTER VI.

RUSSIAN EXPANSION IN CENTRAL ASIA AND THE SEIZURE OF KHIVA.

WITH the partition of Poland Russian aggression westward was put a stop to. It satisfied some of the cravings for acquisition in that direction. Being followed by the wars of Napoleon, the western powers of Europe came out of that conflict in such a state of alliance and consolidation as to effectually dismiss from the Russian mind (at any rate for the time) all further efforts at more subjugation towards the Atlantic.

As a consequence of those various settlements, the most restless spirits of the irrepressible military forces of Russia had to turn their faces exclusively in the direction of the rising sun, and there they completed conquests as far off as the confines of China, filling up gaps left open there by Peter and Catherine, and doing the like on and near the Caspian. Compared with smaller achievements these might appear very considerable, but compared with previous acquisitions they were but shreds and patches.

Only imperfect employment being found for the army, and for disposing of the ambitious proclivities of its principal officers, an occasion was sought in Turkey for more important undertakings, which had for their main object the partition of that decaying empire, after the model previously provided in Poland. England, declining to be a party to any such thing, opposed it, and the Crimean war was the result.

Baffled in that encounter, and consequently compelled to relinquish all immediate designs upon Turkey, the Russian army more than ever stood in need of the active employment most congenial to its tastes. The necessity for providing for such an element in the composition of a nation can scarcely be appreciated in England, but in Russia the necessity is keenly felt. Having a territory so enormous and a population so few in proportion, where great distances and boundless prospects are so familiar to the eye and to life-long observation, where the climate at once inures to extraordinary endurances, and arouses the energies that are essential to overcoming it, there must of necessity be extraordinary incitements

to reckless and adventurous life. This is all the more so because of the ignorance of the vast majority of the people, which leaves their minds unoccupied, and conceals from them almost every outlet for energy except the army, which is the predominant subject for remark everywhere.

In Russia, therefore, composed of so large a portion of a pastoral and ever-moving population, accustomed to rough life, hardship, and adventure, the number of candidates for a military employment and ambitious competitors for advancement in it, is legion. As regards fearless courage and deeds of heroism, there are so many that it requires something very extraordinary to attain to special promotion. The Russian Government, while availing itself of its consequent advantages from a military point of view, has to recognise and, to some extent, provide for as a prime difficulty, the fact that is but mildly illustrated in other countries, that the best and most available fighting men in time of war are liable to become the most troublesome and difficult to deal with in time of peace.

There are, consequently, two distinct inducements for the Russian Government, as now circumstanced, to adopt a policy of warfare; one, appearing on the surface, is the satisfaction of acquiring new territory and political power, the other, not so much on the surface, but operating with deeper influence, the necessity for occupying the most energetic and turbulent of its subjects, who might otherwise become a serious danger.

These are the conditions that so powerfully stimulated the acquisition, shortly before the Crimean war, of 70,000 square miles of the northern part of Persia, as well as 270,000 absorbed from Tartary. The ending of the Crimean war again totally cast loose the elements of action further east. The effect of such action at first operated most extensively to the south east of the sea of Aral, and to the north of Bokhara, in the country roughly described as Turkestan, and chiefly on the river Sir Dari, Chemkend and Tashkend being amongst the landmarks of that part of the world.

These operations were under the instructions or with the permission of the imperial minister, Count Gertschakoff (otherwise Gortschakow), and were conducted in the first instance by the notorious Gen. Tchernayeff, who was rewarded with the governorship of Turkestan. Having mastered the whole of the banks of the Sir Dari, he turned his attention southwards to the Bokhara country.

It is part of the deep policy of Russia, in all these conquests, to

India's Danger and England's Duty.

give preferences to the traders amongst the people who submit, and to oppose the operations of the traders of neighbouring people who have not submitted. In the prosecution of this policy as usual, in the towns occupied by the Russians, the merchandise of every Bokharan was sequestered. The Ameer of Bokhara at once retaliated by arresting all the Russian merchants who happened to be within the city of Bokhara. The accounts of these proceedings on either side somewhat differ, as usual. One account says that the Bokharan merchants, not the merchandise, were arrested because the Ameer of Bokhara had demanded the evacuation by the Russians of Chemkend and Tashkend, but another says the interference with the property or persons, or both, of the Bokharan merchants, was a ruse on purpose to provoke the kind of retaliation which actually occurred, so that there might be an ostensible justification for war upon Bokhara of which Tchernayeff accordingly availed himself.

He crossed the Sir Dari at Chinaz, and demanded the release of the Ameer's Russian prisoners, but this was refused unless the Bokhara prisoners were first released by the Russians. With fourteen companies of infantry, 900 Cossacks, sixteen guns, and 1,200 camels, Tchernayeff advanced towards Bokhara and a battle soon followed, from which the Russians were compelled to retreat to the Sir Dari. Soon afterwards Tchernayeff was recalled to St. Petersburg, professedly because he advanced upon Bokhara, but it is contended by adverse critics that his recall was owing, not to his advance but to its defeat.

Gen. Romanovsky immediately succeeded and proceeded with the utmost alacrity to avenge the defeat. Having received reinforcements of 3,000 fighting men, he advanced from Tashkend, and the Bokharans were soon afterwards totally routed. A second battle entirely annihilated the Ameer's army, but he took refuge at Sar-makand, unfortunately for the Bokharans of that city. The Russians were not strong enough to attempt to reduce it then, but, upon the return of Gen. Kryjinovsky (who had formerly exercised considerable authority in the district) measures were taken and several successes gained, but operations were stayed in accordance with instructions from St. Petersburg, until Gen. Kaufmann superseded Romanovsky. The new governor, in April, 1868, after being immensely strengthened with reinforcements, vigorously operated against Bokhara. Several cities were taken and many battles fought before entire subjection could be imposed, but the Ameer

was at length constrained to sign a treaty of peace, pledging him to pay an indemnity of £75,000. He was under the impression that the Russians would give up Sarmakand, but they refused to do so, though they restored him to a portion of his original territory, and assisted him to recover possession of the city of Bokhara, where his sons had rebelled against him.

The resistance of the Ameer of Bokhara, thus glanced at, was the severest the Russians had to contend with on or near the Sir Dari. On that river, generally, resistance was very feeble; thus, Fort Niazbek, sixteen miles from Tashkend, which was the most formidable defence of the Turkomans, capitulated after a few hours' fire of the Russian batteries. Only seven Russians were slightly wounded and not one killed. Tashkend itself, one of the most populous cities, had 30,000 armed men to defend it, but surrendered to 1951 Russians and twelve guns, whose loss was only eighty wounded and twenty-eight killed, of whom there was not one officer.

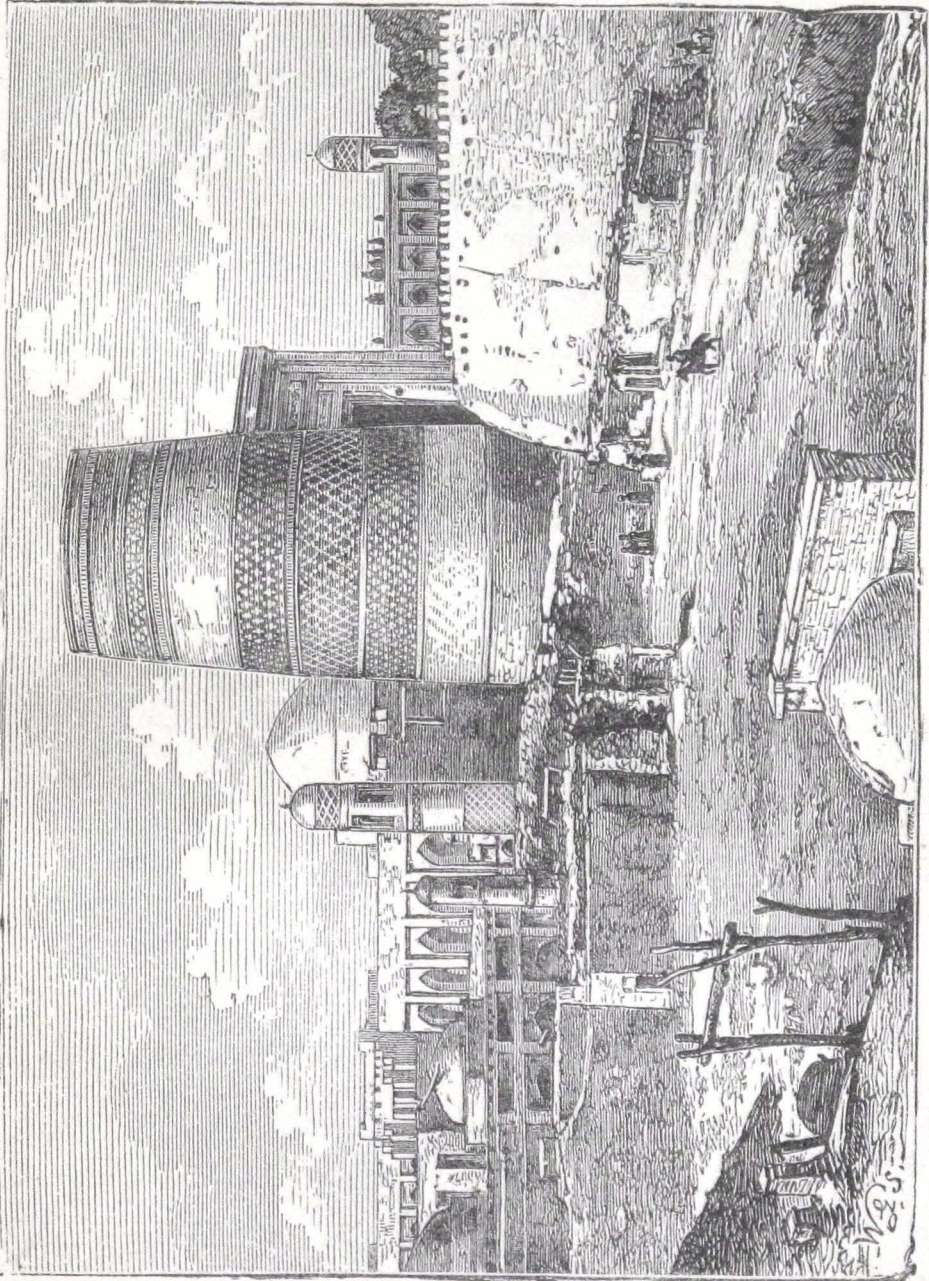
These events in Turkoman territory and Bokhara gave Russia a firm and new base of operations, and it was soon suggested that Khiva would have to bear the brunt of encounters with Russia. Repeated declarations had been made by the Russian government that the imperial government did not desire to annex more territory. In a circular despatch of Prince Gortschakoff, dated November 21, 1864, this had been emphatically enunciated. Amongst its other declarations it said: "We have adopted the line between Lake Issyk Kul and the Syr Darja (otherwise Sir Dari) besides fortifying Chemkend, which has been recently taken by us. We find ourselves in the presence of a more solid, compact, less unsettled, and better organised social state, fixing for us with geographical precision the limit to which we are bound to advance and at which we must halt, because, on the one hand, any further extension of our rule, meeting as it would no longer with unstable communities such as the nomad tribes, but with more regularly constituted states, would entail considerable exertions, and would draw us on from annexation to annexation with complications which cannot be foreseen."

The following, however, is the most emphatic passage: "It is unnecessary for me to call attention to the evident interest that Russia has in not extending her territory. Of late years people have been pleased to assign to Russia the mission of civilising the countries which are her neighbours in the continent of Asia. The

advancement of civilization has no agent more efficient than commercial relations. These last, to become developed, require order and stability, but in Asia this necessitates a complete change of customs. Asiatics must be made to understand that it is more to their interest to favour and insure the trade of caravans, than to pillage them. These elementary notions can only penetrate the public conscience when there is an organised society and a government to direct and represent it. We accomplish the first part of this task in advancing our frontier to the limit where these indispensable conditions are to be found.

“We accomplish the second by endeavouring henceforward to prove to the neighbouring states by a firm system, so far as the suppression of their ill-feelings is concerned, but at the same time by moderation and justice in the employment of force, and by respecting their independence, that Russia is not their enemy, that she entertains towards them no ideas of conquest, and that peaceful and commercial relations will be more profitable than disorder, pillage, reprisals, and permanent warfare. In consecrating itself to this task, the Imperial Cabinet is inspired by Russian interests. It believes that at the same time it serves the interests of civilisation and humanity. It has the right to count on an equitable and loyal appreciation of the steps which it pursues, and of the principles by which it is guided.”

These extracts betray one or three states of mind ; either a desire to deceive, or strange confusion of ideas, or amazing ignorance of the circumstances referred to. Thus Russia's newly discovered interest in refraining from further annexations is stated to be owing to the discovery that all the unstable communities were annexed already, so that what remained were organised enough to appreciate the advantages of promoting trade by keeping order. On the contrary, there were yet left the districts of Khiva, the Turkomans throughout a considerable broad region along the outside of the borders of modern Persia, and the city and district of Merv. None of these then came up to the better organised social state which Prince Gortschakoff declared to be the legitimate bar to further Russian conquest. On the contrary, throughout the whole of the districts we enumerate, there was an utter lack of that public conscience which could appreciate that peaceful and commercial relations are more profitable than disorder, pillage, reprisals, and permanent warfare.



KHIVA, TEMPLE OF THE PALACE.

Naturally enough, the interpretation put upon this despatch by Russians, has been very different to that put upon it by the hasty deductions of daily journalists and casual readers in England. The declaration that Russia has ceased to have an interest in further extensions of territory, taken without qualification, as it is apt to be, reads in the light of subsequent events, like a fraud. But it is not without qualification. It is expressly qualified by a condition, the fulfilment of which is presumed in the assumption that all Asia, not as yet annexed in 1864, was too well organised to need the interference which Prince Gortschakoff considered undesirable in cases of solid and compact organisations.

Inasmuch as, so far as Khiva and Merv were in particular considered, the condition failed, of course the declaration became void, and Russia could not be reasonably bound by it. Whether the condition was included in order to cover further Russian aggression, or was innocently adopted in ignorance of the actual facts, is matter for lively controversy. Of course the would-be severe critics of Russia refuse to argue the point. They denounce the despatch as a glaring and undoubted fraud, and perhaps they are right; but, supposing the supposition as to the state of the remainder of Asia to have arisen from ignorance, it would not be the first time nor the last of the exhibition of astounding ignorance on the part of statesmen of other countries as well as Russia.

Acting upon the qualified interpretation of the despatch we have suggested, or disregarding the despatch altogether, or knowing it to be merely intended to be a blind to Western Europe, which the critics of Russia contend, General Kaufmann evidently began to consider of Khiva as soon as he had leisure enough in his governorship to look about him. He clearly saw that Khiva did not fulfil the condition. It was the constant arena for disorder, pillage, and reprisals. It was evidently an illustrative case in point that "Asiatics must be made to understand."

In due time (after a lapse of the greater part of five years from the treaty with Bokhara) he organised an expedition to Khiva. This becoming known in England, representations were made to the imperial Government at St. Petersburg, and the response was a friendly explanation that the expedition was decided upon for the spring of 1873, but, to give an idea of its character, it was sufficient to say that it would consist of four and a half battalions. Its object was to punish acts of brigandage, to recover fifty Russian

prisoners, and to teach the Khan of Khiva that such conduct on his part could not be continued with the impunity in which the moderation of Russia had led him to believe. Not only was it far from the intention of the Emperor to take possession of Khiva, but positive orders had been prepared to prevent it, and directions given that the conditions imposed should be such as could not in any way lead to a prolonged occupancy of Khiva.

English critics said all this would be disregarded. As to Khiva, they said Kaufmann would take it, and he took it. They said he would permanently hold it, and he permanently held it. They seemed to be quite unaware that their noisy prognostications aided and justified him. To say that he would do so-and-so was tantamount to saying that, in his circumstances, he ought to. As they so clamorously pointed out what a splendid chance he had or further distinguishing himself he could scarcely avoid availing himself of the chance. They cried "wolf, wolf!" not as a caution to his victims, but as an invitation to the wolf to come; and he came. The critics were right they said, and so was he, he said. If he had not taken Khiva, the critics would have been bitterly disappointed, and so would he. As it was they were presumably content, and so was he. Never was such unanimity of sentiment.

The expedition started in February, eventually swelled to much more than the force originally mentioned. After several efforts at stubborn resistance the city of Khiva surrendered unconditionally on the 10th of June. The Khan fled, but returned and accepted the position of a vassal of the Czar on the 5th of July. An insurrection against the Russians was crushed in August, and a part of the Khivan territory annexed to Russia on the 15th of October 1873.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ONLY CHANCE OF A REMEDY AND A SETTLEMENT.

FORTUNATELY for the future of the human race, affairs are not entirely governed by critics, such as those referred to in the previous chapter. They, both amateurs and mentors, who were so exercised about the approaches to Khiva and its acquisition by Russia, are forward in their clamour now for actual warfare. They believe, or appear to believe, that the threat of it would probably have saved Khiva, and resort to it would certainly. It is a good case with which to illustrate parallel positions.

Critics of average capacity seem to regard the Khivans as patriots who have been defrauded of their heritage, who (to say nothing of their moral or political characteristics) lead the pastoral life of the ancients, as depicted in classic fable; who are solely engaged in feeding their flocks and herds by day, and tending them under the placid light of the moon by night, barring charming episodes of the gentle shepherd and shepherdess in picturesque companionship, and the patriarchs sitting under vines and fig-trees, which are at all times ample protection in such a genial latitude. It must be, and is thus reasoned well, for the latitude is eleven degrees south of London. The critic becomes enthusiastic.

Mentors of critics as well as amateurs are apt to be mistaken. They may be about the character of the people of Khiva. They are very likely mistaken about their surroundings, especially with reference to the climate. In the first place it is more a sporting than a pastoral country. There are great numbers of pheasants and other game, including numerous wild beasts that need only passing mention, as they are much the same there as elsewhere. There is immense fertility of the soil for corn and farm produce, and especially for fruits of almost every description, including the finest melons in the world, figs, and grapes, perfectly delicious to contemplate, and more so to eat. So much for the roseate tints.

The face of the country consists mainly of vast steppes, stretching further than the eye can reach, and it is this remarkable lay of

the surface of the earth that produces so extreme a converse of seasons. To the south there is the Kirghis desert. The cold there is said to be a thing unknown in any other part of the world, even in the Arctic regions. An enormous expanse of flat country extending for hundreds of miles, and devoid of everything save snow and salt lakes, and here and there a species of bramble. The winds are of a character unknown to the inhabitants of Europe. When they grumble at the so-called east wind, they can little imagine what that wind is like when exposed to the full fury of its first onslaught. For there you meet with no warm ocean to mollify its rigour, no trees, no rising land, no hills or mountains to check it in its course. It blows on uninterruptedly over a vast snow and salt-covered track. It absorbs the saline matter, and cuts the faces of those exposed to its gusts. The sensation is more like the touch of the edge of a razor than anything else to which it can be compared.

The cold in January has been mentioned as on one occasion the greatest ever experienced. Sentries posted outside the Governor's house were obliged to wear the thickest goloshes stuffed with hay, and to keep running backwards and forwards the whole time on duty, to prevent their feet freezing. The instant a man left the house, his moustache was frozen into a solid block of ice. If his nose were exposed to the wind for a minute or so, it turned first blue and then white, whilst, as to touching with the bare hand anything in the shape of metal, you might as well have taken hold of a red-hot iron. Of a party of ten soldiers, several were frost-bitten, two to death. Ordinary clothing consists of sheepskins; and thick furs are worn where practicable. In riding on horseback, the stirrup-irons must be swathed in hay or other covering, to prevent freezing to the feet. Travellers are recorded as plaintively exclaiming, on setting out for a journey, "Please God, we shall not be frozen!"

In an attempt under the Russian government to take Khiva, in 1839, under the command of Gen. Perovski, intense frost and heavy snowstorms compelled him to retire, having lost two-thirds of his men, 9,000 camels, and an immense number of horses—the expense of the abortive expedition amounting to six-and-a-half millions of roubles. That experience, and others since, have forced upon the Russian government extraordinary precautions with reference to military operations in this region. Some idea of the

magnitude of the preparations may be arrived at, when it is stated that the amount of train in a steppe campaign depends on the quantity of provisions and other requisites which have to be carried by the expeditionary force. The following are the chief articles to be carried: Food, forage, horse equipment, officers' and soldiers' baggage, medicines and hospital stores, felt tents and camp equipage. The proportion of this equipage for a company of 170 men is as follows: Six cast-iron boilers with lids, two white metal dram-cups, seven water vessels, seven pounds of pepper, four pounds and a half of laurel-leaves, 100 pounds of leaf tobacco, nine bottles of essence of vinegar, 100 pounds of onions, ten pounds of garlic, ten pounds of horseradish, ten pounds of soap, 200 pounds of salt, three wooden troughs, five scythes, 120 mats, 300 fathoms of rope, three hatchets, three spades, three picks, seven shovels, two white metal mugs, one eight-gallon cask, three wooden shovels, one net, one iron pail, and 170 wooden teacups. The weight of this is from 1,200 to 1,600 pounds. Sometimes there have to be carried such things as wood field forges, bridging material, portable wells, guns on pack animals, and finally a number of spare horses or camels, in case of forming sick convoys, flying detachments, or for carrying convalescents, &c.

From this list of necessaries, it is plain that the train of a steppe detachment must be very numerous. In European warfare, one cart ordinarily suffices for forty or fifty men. In steppe campaigns it is otherwise; every two or three men must have an animal, and some times more. If we suppose, for example, Cossack sotnia (150 men) taking the field with a months' supplies, then, according to calculation, it will require about eighty camels, without counting officers' baggage carts, for the transport of military stores, the sick, &c. This is the reason that military detachments marching in the steppe are nothing else but an escort to their own numerous trains.

For carrying the baggage in steppe campaigns, pack animals are used, two-horse or one-horse carts, and, lastly, bullock transport. The baggage is so arranged that each pair-horse or pair bullock cart has not more than 1,400 pounds, each one-horse 700 pounds, each camel-load 680 pounds. The quantity of carts or camels, and consequently the size of the train, is calculated for each unit. Assuming the company of infantry at 200 men, inclusive of servants, non-combatants, and officers, it requires for one month 12,480 pounds of biscuit (net weight), 2,080 pounds of groats (net), in lieu of five-

sixths of the monthly allowance of spirit, sixty pounds of tea, and 180 pounds of sugar, and five gallons and a half of spirits, weighing eighty pounds; oats for the draught horses 600 pounds; fifteen kibitkas, being ten per company, two for sick, three for officers, each weighing 260 pounds, equal to 3,900 pounds; felts for bedding (ten pounds to twelve pounds), camp equipage and anti-scorbutic stores, 1,200 pounds to 2,000 pounds; men's kits at sixty pounds, 12,000 pounds; ammunition, 2,000 pounds; in all, about sixteen tons. If this amount of baggage be placed in one-horse carts, 1,000 pounds in each, thirty-six carts will be required. Of this number for food alone (six tons and a half) fifteen carts, and as the detachments are never sent for less than two months, fifty carts will be required. To this number we must add three or four additional carts.

Over and above the special military train equipments required, there is the special clothing for every man, whether soldier or camp follower; and it next has to be borne in mind that Khiva is a thousand miles in a straight line from the nearest port to which British ships could by any possibility have access; and, that being a Persian port, there must be a treaty of a very unequivocal character with that power before a man could be landed. Then there would be the march through Persia, along difficult and toilsome roads hardly superior to those of the wildest country. The distance across Persia in a straight line being 750 miles, it could scarcely be less than 1000 by such ways as were practicable. Upon arrival, Russia, if necessary, could be there ready to receive us with a number of men far exceeding anything we could muster at such a distance. There being no nearer or better way of getting there (for there are no navigable rivers available), a proposal to undertake any such thing is, on the face of it, preposterous. Proposals might seem plausible to strike Russia in a more vulnerable place, pending the relinquishment of Khiva; but are the Khivans worth the sacrifice? Though the sacrifice were made, it would not be the Russian manner to comply in such circumstances—at any rate, not to the letter. It would rather be all the worse for the Khivans.

No doubt the government of 1868-74 had these things before them and many more. They were only too well informed that the vapourings of the self-constituted critics were worthless manifestations of the solid opinion of the country. It was well that so astute and courteous a statesman as Earl Granville was then foreign

minister. It is well for his party and the country that it should be remembered to his honour.

He had before him the Schouvaloff despatch. He knew the difference of interpretation put upon it by shallow critics and men of experience—between the interpretations of pretended representatives of English opinion and the influential classes of Russia. He appreciated those differences; and, while the vapouring went on, calmly plied his diplomatic forces with success. While conceding that England had no interest in the wild tribes of central Asia for their own sakes, and that if Russia thought proper to subdue them it was not our business or interest to resist on their behalf, yet he took care to impress upon the Russian government that such operations must have a limit, and that it was to the interest of both empires that such limit should be defined with more precision.

Thus courteously drawn on, the Russian government exhibited an earnest desire to accede to Earl Granville's views: In response to his suggestions it was distinctly laid down that, in any circumstances, Russia considered Afghanistan beyond the legitimate field of Russian influence and entirely outside the scope of Russia's operations. Any desire to infringe upon Afghanistan in any way was earnestly repudiated. It is this point that is insisted upon so triumphantly by the English critics of Russia to-day. They seem to imagine that Russia stands condemned out of her own mouth by an obvious disregard, not to say defiance, of the clear declaration of those days by Russian proceedings of to-day. But there is something else to be said.

From 1842 until 1874 England had acted upon the policy of refraining from interference with the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Persia had been compelled by the British to relinquish operations in Afghanistan. There was a general understanding all round that Afghanistan was to be neutral ground—a kind of "buffer state," as it has been called. England, who had compelled Persia and induced Russia to assent to that understanding, was impliedly bound to abide by it too. That is an element of the present controversy, which is of supreme importance. The next question was, where was the boundary of Afghanistan beyond which Russia was willing to undertake not to go?

Even the extremest partisans amongst the adverse critics of Russia are compelled to admit that the boundaries of Oriental

states have always been extremely elastic. In accepting any such boundary for state purposes the extremest caution is necessary. No statesman would consent to abide by any such boundary unless it was surveyed and clearly laid down.

Notwithstanding these grounds for uncertainty, it is admitted on all hands that the boundaries that have been recognised as enclosing Afghanistan since 1842 are sufficiently defined on every side except the north west. Russia, volunteering to respect any boundary clearly agreed upon, proposed to Earl Granville to determine by mutual consent where the boundary really was. As a preliminary to fixing with precision where the line should be drawn, Russia then agreed that (subject to verification) Akshan, Sir-i-Pul, Mymeneh, Shiberjan, Andekoi and the dependencies of Herat, were districts that might be considered within the boundary of Afghanistan, with the following important qualifications. Said the Russian minister: "Dost Mahommed Khan had left behind him a state of confusion which will not allow of the territorial extension which Afghanistan had acquired at a certain moment of his reign being accepted as a basis. It was consequently agreed that no territories should be taken into account but such as, having formerly recognised the authority of Dost Mahommed, were still in the actual possession of Shere Ali Khan."

But that was only a tentative proposal. The extremest critics admit that the memorandum was evidently drawn up as a mere basis for negotiation, and not as a formal declaration of territorial rights. It is also admitted that the boundary indicated was by no means explicit enough to be acted upon with certainty. It is contended by the same adverse critics that it implied a direct line from Sarakhs to Khoja-Saleh. We have lately had prominently before us the question of boundaries in England; and it would be difficult to find any one new parliamentary boundary that exhibits in the least degree any such basis as a direct line. Most of them are in defiance of the direct-line rule, or any other rule; and yet there are men, who have been boggling over the so-called difficulties of such familiar boundaries as these at our very doors, speaking with the utmost confidence of the eternal justice and obvious necessity of the direct line to be drawn thousands of miles off, through a barbarous district without any reliable landmarks which they have ever seen. It would seem that these men are prepared to go to war if the line is not drawn to their satisfaction.

It must be inferred, therefore, that the agreement or understanding arrived at between Earl Granville and Prince Gortschakoff, and which was no doubt expressly assented to by the latter, was subject to three conditions. Firstly, that there must be a survey to determine which were the boundaries of the districts alluded to. Secondly, that the understanding was open to modification by any facts previously unknown which the survey might disclose. Thirdly, that the whole understanding, in principle as well as in detail, depended for its integrity upon the continuance and maintenance of all the other leading circumstances to which Afghanistan had been committed, especially its neutrality, which had been an essential condition all through.

In carrying the negotiation on as far as it went, Earl Granville merits the undying gratitude of Englishmen. He most wisely availed himself of the only chance of remedying the mischiefs that were anticipated, and of arriving at a settlement which had every chance of being permanent. While the critics were cutting themselves with their own criticisms, and, after the manner of the priests of Baal, invoking the north wind to blow off Russia's coat of mail, Earl Granville was bringing to bear the sunshine of diplomatic genius, until the coat was voluntarily laid aside.

Had these negotiations been followed up, as they ought to have been, with a survey conducted in the same spirit, succeeded by a treaty laying down the line by which Russia proposed and offered to be bound, there would have been created a priceless security for peace in our day, probably for generations, and possibly for ever. Supposing that to be too favourable an inference, we should have at least secured this advantage that, the line being there, and Russia having agreed to it, we could have appealed to it and no doubt would have appealed to it, in case of infringement, with an authority which we should have been entitled to maintain, and unanimously ready to maintain, by all the mighty forces of our great empire.

Why was that chance allowed to slip? Why was it that Earl Granville failed to carry to maturity a negotiation begun so wisely and so well? If we are to take the vapourings of the critics for our evidence, it was because of the vacillation of the Liberal party, the leaders of which are said not to know their own minds two days together. The critics have bad memories, or pretend they have when it suits them. When they say it was the vacillation of the Liberal party they know better. That party has committed great

blunders ; its leaders have been vacillating without a doubt ; they have not been equal to their opportunities for good ; they have not used their power firmly enough to resist evil ; but they are not responsible for *every* failure. In reviewing all the circumstances which rendered abortive the boundary negotiations of 1873, it is necessary to be explicit. As our next chapter will show, it was not the fault of Earl Granville ; it was not the fault of the ministers of whom he was then one ; it was not the fault of the Liberal party. Under each and all of these heads the fault lay in precisely the opposite direction.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW THE CHANCE WAS LOST, AND HOW THE PROSPECTS OF SETTLEMENT WERE DESTROYED.

THE memoranda concerning the boundary of Afghanistan, carried on so successfully by Earl Granville with Prince Gortschakoff, were brought into a definite form, and fitted as a base for negotiation in 1873. In February, 1874, there was a general election. The result reversed the order of parties in the House of Commons, and the Liberal ministry, including Earl Granville, resigned. A Tory Government succeeded. The Tories were as much astonished as the Liberals were dismayed. The change was attributed to a political revolution amongst the voters, but it was really in consequence of the imbecility of our electoral machinery, which permitted a minority of voters to return a large majority of members. The imbecility of the electoral machinery, so far from being cured, is aggravated and made immeasurably worse by the electoral legislation of 1874-5, whereby the risk of a majority of voters one way, being compelled to submit to a majority of members the other way, is greatly increased. Superficial observers look upon it all as a huge joke, as they did the fiasco of 1874, while the average voter perhaps thinks it does not much matter, or that it is of no importance; but, that it is of the weightiest importance is proved by results.

With the necessary resignation of the Liberal ministry in 1874, Earl Granville was compelled to retire also. The government of Russia did not know anything about our electoral imbecility, but knew that a ministry expressly hostile to them had acceded to power, and believed that there was a majority of electors behind them. It looked like a result in every way adverse to Russia. In face of such a change it is to be presumed that Russia regarded the correspondence with Earl Granville as worthless, and that seems to have been the opinion of the Tory ministers. If they did attempt to revive or continue it they failed; so that, either way, the break-down lay at their door, and that is how the chance was

lost. The responsibility for that loss rests upon the Tory ministers of 1874-80, and all the troubles with Russia ever since, the war demonstrations of to-day, and the millions of expenditure consequently incurred already and to be incurred hereafter, from which there seems to be no escape.

It is desirable in this place to refer back to the later pages of our fifth chapter. On the assumption of power by the Tory ministers of 1874-80, Shere Ali was still the Ameer of Afghanistan. The people of Bengal to the number of 39,000,000, in twenty-six different districts, were suffering from a dreadful famine. Lord Northbrook had been sworn in as Viceroy of India on May 3, 1872, he being the nominee of the then Liberal Government at home. It was in these circumstances that the Marquis of Salisbury, on February 21, 1874, accepted the office of Secretary of State for India. On the 8th of April, Sir R. Temple was installed as Lieut.-Governor of Bengal on the retirement of Sir George Campbell. The famine was said to be over in September, there having been expended in relief £6,500,000, of which an amount of £55,000 was raised in London as the Mansion House fund. The Prince of Wales visited India from October 11, 1875, to March 13, 1876.

Down to the date last named nothing of importance occurred with reference to Afghanistan, nor was there anything affecting that country arising out of the change of ministers. Soon afterwards, however, the effect of that change began to be apparent. On the 12th of April, in 1876, Lord Northbrook was superseded by Lord Lytton, the nominee of the Tory ministers, and the change of policy soon became decided. The Royal Style and Titles Act was passed at Westminster on the 27th of the same month, conferring upon the Queen the title of Empress of India. She was accordingly proclaimed as such in London on the 1st of May, and at Calcutta on the 19th of August, the proclamation being published there by Lord Lytton. As some observers had ventured to predict, all this was the precursor of the heroic policy of which Lord Lytton was to become the instrument.

Afghanistan had remained tolerably quiet since 1873, and Ayooob Khan, being imprisoned by his father in December, 1874, was not likely to give much more trouble for the present. As before remarked, there is no evidence that the Tory ministers had made any adequate endeavour to follow up the admirable effort of Earl Granville to settle with Russia the line of the north-west boundary

of Afghanistan. It seems to have been considered beneath their notice, and by no means the sort of thing they would care about bringing into comparison with the far loftier views they entertained, in which views Lord Lytton seems to have concurred with much warmth.

Order reigned in Afghanistan, then, to a greater extent than had ever been known before. There was every reason for letting the dog lie. Shere Ali had received his subsidy like a lamb, and had conducted himself with becoming discretion towards the British authorities ever since he had first had the advantage of it. Another famine was affecting an untold number of the Indian population. It is recorded that there were 919,771 employed on relief works with a view to mitigation of the widespread suffering, and a loan of £5,000,000 was taken up to pay the expenses; but that was nothing compared to the designs that were brewing about Afghanistan.

Lord Lytton, being determined to carry matters there with a high hand, demanded in 1877 that a British resident, nominated by himself, should be allowed to take up his permanent quarters at Cabul. This was not only attempting what had so notoriously failed before, but was opening old sores that were sure to irritate the Afghans, whether Shere Ali consented or not. It is quite likely that he was afraid to consent. Had he willingly assented his life would not have been worth a month's purchase. All the information obtained in former years, tending to prove that the Ameer only reigned by sufferance of the sirdars, seems to have been lost upon Lord Lytton and the Tory ministers by whom he was inspired. The Ameer was held personally responsible, and, when he declined the proposal, apparently under compulsion and with extreme reluctance, his subsidy was ostentatiously withheld.

After thus treating him to insult, as he esteemed it, and injury also, it was made known that he had the impudence to feel offended and to resent the high-handed treatment in which Lord Lytton was indulging. In March, 1878, the Marquis of Salisbury became Foreign Minister, and Lord Cranbrook Minister for India. It was subsequently made known in the same year that a Russian envoy was favourably received at Cabul by the Ameer, and that a treaty of friendship had been then entered into between the parties. Still, these Tory ministers were too blind to see that they were missing the one and only chance of eventual peace prepared so

admirably by Earl Granville, or else, caring little about peace, they purposely let it go. There was still time, but they suffered it to be frittered away. If they had really tried then to settle the north-west boundary and to render permanent the assured neutrality of Afghanistan, there is every reason to believe they could have succeeded, but they would not. It was altogether too mean a thing to be allowed to stand between them and their vaulting heroism. They were going to put to shame the failures of a former generation. They were going to show the Liberal vacillators of the Granville stamp how to do it.

Exhibiting this kind of spirit at every turn, and not to be outdone by Russia, Lord Lytton splendidly equipped and sent in great state as his envoy, the Nawab Gholam Hussein Khan, who, arrived at Cabul late in August. The Ameer not only received him with great favour, but dismissed him with presents, though he was still so obdurate as to decline receiving a permanent resident. In this respect there is no evidence that he made any distinction between Russia and England to the disparagement of the latter. The adverse critics of Russia made a wide impression in England at the time that he did; that Russia was by some insidious means attaining to dominating influence; and that it was necessary to make a counteracting movement.

What are the facts? The Ameer favourably received a Russian envoy; he had previously received many English envoys with equal favour, and he received another immediately afterwards. The Ameer is not recorded to have given the Russian envoy any presents; the English envoy, when he departed, was loaded with such gratifications. The Ameer made a friendly treaty with Russia; he had before made several friendly treaties with England, and was obviously ready to make any number more. The only point upon which there was any difference was this: Russia did not, so far as is known, even so much as *propose* to fix upon the Ameer a permanent Russian resident; England did not propose, but *demand*ed that an English resident should be received. From the Afghan point of view that was the reverse of a friendly overture. Still the envoy, who was charged with such an exceedingly uncomfortable duty was the recipient of gifts.

All this was too much for the equanimity of Lord Lytton. Supposition as to how he received the news suggests to us a vision of the late Mr. Phelps as King John in a rage. Had the envoy been

assassinated for his impudent intrusion, as the Ameer estimated it, that would have served the purpose admirably. Then there would have been something to work upon ; but to dismiss him with handsome presents ! A mere Nawab, too ! Lord Lytton had neither gained his point as to the resident, nor yet had he extorted a clear *casus belli*—courteous entertainment and parting keepsakes being scarcely available in that capacity.

The Viceroy was baffled, but not beaten. The resources of his heroic genius were not exhausted yet. He had sent a message, and it had been received ; its purport not being coarsely resented, but declined with profuse thanks. He had sent an embassy, whose members came off with—not entire compliance, but—tokens of eternal amity. Next he would send a mission. Happy thought ! Such a peaceful and soothing designation for those who are uninitiated in heroic diplomacy. It could scarcely fail to go down at home and go forward to Cabul. And yet not a mission of the meek and quiet order, led by captains of the Salvation Army, with tambourines for their defence, but one with a military escort, the leading missionary being no less than Sir Neville B. Chamberlain, commander of the Madras Army ! This was the sort of thing that was gravely called a mission in all the Tory prints of the day, from the *Quarterly Review* downwards.

This Mission started from Peshawur on the 21st of September, 1878. The distance from Peshawur to the Khyber Pass, in a straight line, is something like fifty miles. On the arrival at Ali Musjid, a fort in the Khyber Pass, Major Cavagnari and an advance party were met by a party of Afghans, with the intimation that the passage of the mission through the Pass would not be permitted. At that time, and all through the contention with Lord Lytton, the Ameer and his representatives repeatedly expressed to the British representatives that the British residency was objected to, not on its merits, or out of any hostile feeling towards England, but that the chiefs among influential Afghans were so strongly opposed to the intrusion of any foreigners with any appearance of making a permanent settlement, that the Ameer could not and would not undertake the responsibility of ensuring the safety of the proposed resident or anyone seeking to impose him upon Cabul.

Upon receipt of this message through its advanced guard, and considering the great probability of being strongly resisted, the whole body of the mission and escort returned to Peshawur on

September 24. Immediately afterwards, Gholam Hussein was sent to Cabul with an ultimatum requiring the Ameer to assent, without further parley, to the British proposals, and demanding a favourable reply not later than November 20.

Simultaneously, a large military force was prepared for contingencies, one division assembling at Quettah, another at Peshawur, and a third at Kuram. The divisions included, in all, close upon 50,000 fighting men, of whom about 35,000 were Indian, and the rest British. During their first equipment, a despatch was received from Lord Cranbrook expressing entire approval of the course pursued by Lord Lytton.

With this additional assurance of being in the right, and no reply having been received from the Ameer, the military forces began to move forward about the middle of November. Ali Musjid was shelled and occupied on the 22nd, two officers and thirty-five men being killed, besides wounded. A proclamation by the Viceroy to the Afghans was immediately issued. If it had any effect, it was only to exasperate the Afghans afresh. Dakka and Pisheen were occupied on the 23rd, and Kuram Fort on the 25th. Kuddum, a refuge of the Guilzais, was burnt on the 1st of December.

Gen. Roberts, who became the most distinguished officer of that time, gained a victory in the Peiwar Pass on the 2nd of December. It was a severe engagement, two officers and eighty men being killed; besides wounded. On the 3rd an evasive reply was received from the Ameer. Jelalabad was occupied on the 20th.

Shere Ali fled from Cabul on the 13th, and the government there was assumed by Ayoob Khan. The Russian mission, after a stay of four months, then retired. On the 26th, Gen. Roberts proclaimed the annexation of the Kuram district, entered Khoost territory on the 3rd of January, 1879, and defeated a party of Mangals, near Matoon, on the 7th.

Candahar was meanwhile abandoned by the Afghans on the 6th of January, and Gen. Stewart entered that city unopposed on the 7th. After this there was an interval, during which little or nothing was done, which is not surprising considering the nature of the climate there at that season of the year. During the lull, the important news was spread on the 20th of February that Shere Ali had died.

In our third chapter is mentioned the difficulty of crossing the Cabul river, except at the driest season. Ignorant of this, or indif-

ferent to it, and being tired of inaction, the leading officers determined to reach the opposite bank, and an attempt was made to cross on the 31st of March. Forty-six men of the 10th Hussars were carried away by the current, and drowned; but Gen. Gough, on April 2, defeated a mixed force of 5,000 Afghans, when, amongst others, Major Wigram Batty was killed.

Ayoob Khan, who had succeeded his father in the ordinary course, arrived at Gandamak on the 8th of May, and tendered his disposition to negotiate. In consequence of this friendly advance of his, he was formally recognised as the Ameer on the 9th, and negotiations proceeded. They resulted in a treaty of peace, signed on the 26th, which gave the right to the British to occupy the Khyber Pass and the Kuram and Pisheen valleys. The right of the British to nominate and maintain a resident at Cabul was also conceded. In return for all this, Ayoob Khan got the friendly alliance of the British, together with the substantial undertaking to pay him an annual subsidy of £60,000, with the additional proviso that the British forces were to retire, except so far as the reserved districts were concerned. The treaty being ratified on the 30th, the retirement duly commenced on the 8th of July.

The point was gained—at enormous sacrifice of life and treasure, but still it was gained. On the 24th of July the resident nominate, Sir Louis Cavagnari, with a suitable escort, entered Cabul in triumph and got an honorable reception. Lord Lytton was thus master of the situation. The Tory ministers at home were jubilant. Thanks were voted in Parliament to the viceroy, officers, and men. But the echoes of the cheering had barely died away, the congratulatory matter in the newspapers had scarcely disappeared from the columns of those which were apt to be a day or two in arrear, when there was a sudden change of scene which startled the Tory ministers out of their equanimity, and awakened feelings of horror and dismay throughout Britain.

It was the supreme blunder of Lord Lytton and the Tory ministers at this period, that, having the experience of former events for their guidance and warning, they yet neglected to occupy Cabul in force. All their proceedings were almost as wrong as they could be throughout. They recklessly adopted a wrong policy, and were wrong in every step they took to enforce it, but the abandonment of Cabul, so soon after preceding events, to the risks of native control, was the crowning wrong of the whole business.

No sooner had the British forces retired in accordance with the treaty, and the resident and his little guard of honour settled down into their quarters, than there converged upon Cabul detachments of Afghan fighting men from every direction, especially from Herat. On the 13th of August, as is supposed (for the precise date is not known with certainty), but apparently within ten days after the vote of commendation was passed by the House of Lords, the whole civil and military population of Herat rose against the British residency and guard, who, in defiance of every effort to defend and resist, were overpowered and massacred. Amongst the leading victims were Sir Louis Cavagnari, Mr. Jenkyns, his secretary, Lieut. Hamilton, and Dr. Ambrose Kelly, and many whose names are lost to contemporary history. Only a few Indian natives escaped to tell the tale. The whole occurrence constituted the most disgraceful sacrifice on record of brave and valuable public servants to the criminal carelessness or glaring incompetence of public officials in high places.

Ayoob Khan, who had, in consenting to receive the resident on any terms, given unpardonable offence to his countrymen, evidently stood in terror and danger of popular vengeance being consummated upon him. He and his son fled from Cabul, at the time of the massacre or immediately afterwards, and gave themselves up to Gen. Baker at Kushi on the 27th.

What immediately followed is beyond the possibility of useful detail. Gen. Roberts, when so much too late, occupied Cabul on the 12th of October, after overcoming several stubborn efforts to resist him. As for the rest, there was utter confusion of counsel and of proceedings. There was a great mutiny at Herat, the military and civil governors being killed, but precisely why nobody knows. Elsewhere Afghanistan was given over to desultory warfare, with great aggregate loss of life on both sides. There was no one in decently constituted authority anywhere. Bodies of natives submitted and resisted by turns. There were treacherous explosions of ammunition on a great scale, accompanied by heavy loss of life. No great battle could be fought, but resistance cropped up on all sides. Nothing decisive was possible. Martial law was vainly proclaimed. Cities were occupied by the British, but to no purpose. Their Afghan defenders, after killing all the British they could, and retreating from one place, would turn up defiantly at another. They often succeeded in temporary victory, the retreat of Gen. Gough

before them on December 16th being a notable instance, but were generally driven off, only to appear again somewhere else.

As for Ayooob Khan, he abdicated, or pretended to do so, in October. Musa Khan attempted to exercise authority, but failed. A young Shere Ali, cousin of the late Ameer, was made governor of Candahar by the British, but to no purpose. Everything was in hopeless confusion. The extraordinary physical difficulties of the country, combined with the unique character of its people, was made more than ever evident.

It was in the midst of this confusion that the general election took place in 1880. The Tory ministers and their Tory Governor General did their best, which proved to be their worst, in Afghanistan. It was evident that they were incapable of extricating themselves either with peace or honour, but they were kindly extricated by the aid of others. They were defeated by an unprecedented majority at the general election, and resigned. Looking at the irremediable mischief they did, it was a merciful fate, far too magnanimous for their deserts.

Altogether apart from every other consideration, the Tory ministers of 1874-80, with reference to Afghanistan, stand condemned beyond the possibility of extenuation or excuse. Their conduct amounted, in effect, to tearing up the Granville-Gortschakoff memoranda and contemptuously throwing it in the face of Russia. They plumed themselves upon their courage and spirit in doing so, and gave out that Russia was afraid to do other than accept the insult in silence. The Tory rank and file applauded the idea with rapture. They were too dull to perceive that their ministers were doing Russia's work, by absolving her, morally and legally, from the obligation of adherence to the line agreed upon, because it was obliterated by the proceedings detailed in this chapter. For, in addition to ignoring the memoranda, one of the conditions upon which it was based was flagrantly violated. The understanding which bound both powers to respect the neutrality of Afghanistan was ruthlessly set aside by the invasion of the country, and the ultimate consequences can hardly fail to be more disastrous than the invasion itself.

In such an hour of trial as that imposed upon us in 1885, wholly and solely arising out of the follies and blunders of the Tory ministers referred to, as previously shown, it ill becomes them or their supporters to presume upon the office of criticising the weaknesses of

to-day, which they, indeed, have done their best to fasten upon us. The official responsibility, and more than the official responsibility, for the enormous expenditure involved, rests upon their shoulders; the blood already shed and to be shed, as a consequence, is upon their hands. All the waters of the ocean cannot wash it away, nor the perfumes of Arabia obliterate the sickening odour. Recollections of the events which they brought about—in sheer wantonness and without a shadow of excuse—all over Afghanistan in the time of their abuse of power, should be enough to influence them in the exercise of a little discretion and modesty. It should be enough to hush their intolerable brag, and for ever to put them to silence.

CHAPTER IX.

GETTING OUT OF THE TROUBLE.

THE Liberal Government of 1880 had no option but to take over all the troubles got up and bequeathed to them in Afghanistan as elsewhere. Never was a ministry more loaded with responsibilities for which they ought never to be held responsible. The difficulty and confusion in Afghanistan was immense. Their predecessors in office folded their arms and looked on. They were conscious they had created an amount of mischief that no ministry could be expected to get out of with credit, and they congratulated themselves upon the skill with which they had made well nigh impracticable the administration of affairs. However the business ended it was impossible it could end satisfactorily.

That must have been self-evident to the Liberal Government. Their predecessors had landed them in immeasurable difficulty. It was their obligation to get out of it with the least possible delay and dishonour; not without dishonour, for the dishonour was accomplished already. There is too common an impression that the British Government had, early in 1880, already held possession of Afghanistan, and that the proper thing would be to keep on holding it. The truth is that we at no time held Afghanistan in any such manner as to amount to possession. We held particular places, but, in that country, such holdings were of no avail. All the spaces between were held by Afghans as completely as though we had never entered any part of the country. A very large force, 50,000 men being but the mere commencement, had been employed. The force proved to be totally inadequate. No doubt Afghanistan could be finally subdued by England, but it would take the flower of our army and a majority of all our men to hold it with sufficient force and continuance to compel practical submission. Would the country be worth the sacrifice? Would it be worth any sacrifice whatever? Would its possession be anything but an embarrassment? Could it, being subdued, be kept without an immense permanent force out of all proportion to any possible advantage?

Those were the questions which no doubt forced themselves upon

the Liberal Government, and the conclusion they came to was to evacuate the country as soon as circumstances would permit.

In July 1880, in consequence of Ayooob Khan having proved impracticable, one of the very numerous other grandsons of Dost Mohammed, named Abdur Rahman, was recognised as Ameer, and assisted in asserting his authority at Cabul. Ayooob Khan, who was in authority, such as it was, at Herat, resisted this appointment. With a force of 12,000 men, and 20 guns, he marched upon Candahar, where General Burrows was in command, and a series of very severe engagements immediately followed, in which General Burrows was worsted and compelled to retire into the citadel, which he defended with 4,000 men. An ineffectual sortie thence was made on the 16th of August, extremely heavy loss on both sides being the only result. General Roberts marched from Cabul on the 9th of August, to the relief of Candahar. Almost simultaneously Ayooob Khan was reinforced by Guilzais until his army numbered 20,000. On the 31st of August General Roberts, with about 10,000 men, arrived before Candahar. Ayooob Khan endeavoured to make terms, but they were rejected. On the 1st of September General Roberts defeated and dispersed his army and captured his camp. He fled to Herat, where he continued to make everything uncomfortable, once more returning to Candahar, after its evacuation by the British. There he defeated the Ameer's forces and entered the city for a time. He afterwards operated again at Herat until the end of 1881, when he retired into Persia and made his way to Teheran early in the following year.

Abdur Rahman succeeded tolerably well at Cabul, and on the 11th of August he was left in sole authority there, Sir D. Stewart with all the troops, after a satisfactory interview with the Ameer, finally withdrawing from the city. In November it was announced that all continued tranquil there, and so the restoration of the government to the Ameer was rendered complete.

The most debated point with reference to the events which then rapidly occurred was the evacuation of Candahar in April, 1882. Numerous opinions were expressed, favourable to the relinquishment of the rest of the country, but advocating the retention of that city as a security for the good behaviour of the Ameer, and also that it might be used as an advanced position in anticipation of future emergencies. In the discussion of this subject, much passion has been allowed to intrude, evidently taking its rise, not so much

from consideration of the merits of the case as from party spirit. As an instance we quote from Colonel Malleson who says: "Still Candahar was in our hands, and we might easily have made it a condition with the new Amir whom we had placed in authority, that we should hold it. The reader must bear in mind that the question came up for the last time in the year 1880-1, at the time that Skobelev was preparing the expedition which subdued the Akhal Turkomans. The idea then occurred to me that if those splendid warriors were subdued, and we should, in the very same year, evacuate the frontier fortress which covered all the western passes into Afghanistan, the easily impressed peoples of India would not fail to imbibe the idea, not only that England was retiring before Russia, but that, from fear of Russia, she had left open the one gap in her frontier line, through which the invaders of India from the north had always advanced. To test the correctness of these ideas I visited India, and spent nearly three winter months there, from November to the third week of January, 1880-1. Thirty-five years of previous residence in all parts of the country had made me acquainted with most of its representative men, and I had little difficulty in inducing them to speak frankly with me on the subject.

"I found, amongst all classes, among Muhammadans, as well as among Hindus, a remarkable agreement of opinion. They all condemned the abandonment of Candahar as likely to cause the people of India to lose confidence in the stability of British rule. 'Nadir Shah came by that route' they said, 'and though Candahar stopped him for a year, nothing stopped him after he had taken that place. Russia will of course conquer the Turkomans. And then Russia will be in the place of Nadir Shah. If you leave Candahar, you will leave open a gap by which Russia will easily enter. The native princes, men like Scindiah and Holkar, know that as well as you do. They bear your rule because if you were not here they would fight amongst themselves, and they know you can defend them and maintain order. But if they once think that a greater than you is coming, and they will think so if you deliberately leave the gate open for them to come, the hope of gaining something out of a general scrimmage will pervade their minds, and when you send your army to meet Russia on the Indus, they will strike for independence in your rear.'

"Such was the general opinion expressed to me by the natives of

India, who, in my judgment, were best capable of gauging the views of their countrymen. Shortly after my return to England I embodied, at the request of the members of the Constitutional Union, my experiences in the form of a lecture, which I delivered in February or March of 1881 to a large audience in St. James's Hall. I am bound to add that the Conservative party had long before become alive to the necessity, in the interests of the Empire, in retaining Candahar as the new frontier. Lord Lytton had in the meanwhile returned home, and, I cannot doubt, had expressed very freely his views on the subject. This, at least, is certain, that the idea of the retention of Candahar was adopted by the Conservative opposition, and was made the main theme of their platform speeches during the autumn of 1880, and the first ten weeks of 1881.

“It soon transpired, however, that the Ministry of ‘masterly inactivity’ had no idea of retaining the place. It is curious, looking back from the status of accomplished facts, writing in the third week of this month of March, 1885, when Russia possesses Sarakhs and Merv, and has advanced to Pul-i-Khatun and Zulfagar, within the Herat territory and within striking distance of the city of that name—it is curious I say, to notice the reasons given by the authorities whom they quoted, upon which the Ministry relied to justify their retrograde movement. The most valued of these authorities, General Sir Henry Norman, arguing in a memorandum dated 20th September, 1880, against the retention of Candahar, thus expressed himself: ‘The *probability of our having to struggle for Herat*, or to defend India from Candahar, is so remote that its possibility is hardly worth considering.’ Wonderful forecast! The time so remote as to be hardly worth considering has narrowed itself to a term of less than five years! Sir Evelyn Baring, another expert of the masterly inactivity school, was equally sceptical. Then there was the new Viceroy, Lord Ripon, whose experience of rather less than one year was so valuable: and, last not least, there was that eminent Russomane—the Prime Minister. ‘I have no fear myself,’ had said that high authority, on November 27, 1879, ‘of the territorial extensions of Russia, no fear of them whatever. I think such fears are only old women’s fears.’ Possibly some of the constituents and many of the friends, perhaps even some of the colleagues of Mr. Gladstone, regard now that remark as a libel upon old women!

The question was debated in the House of Lords, on the motion of Lord Lytton, on the 5th of March, 1881. There the motion for the retention of Candahar was carried by a majority of 89 (165 against 76). In the House of Commons, after a debate of two nights, a similar motion was defeated (26th March) by a majority of 120 (336 against 216)."

Concerning the motives which influenced some at least of the members of that majority there follows a story which someone entertained Colonel Malleon with to the top of his bent at his club, which shows how short of matter he must be.

Colonel Malleon, in common with so many of the adverse critics, mistakes the reflection of himself in the shining and delusive surface of affairs, for the great facts that lie beneath, of which he leaves his readers in oblivion. We will not pay him the very poor compliment of supposing that he is in oblivion about them himself, for it is scarcely possible that he can be ignorant of the claims that have been put forward for the maintenance of the absolute neutrality of Afghanistan, which is of far more importance than the mere gratification or opinion of Indian Mahometans, or indulgence of visions of glory which have uniformly ended in defeat in Afghanistan.

The government of "masterly activity" doubtless know much better than he does the value of maintaining that neutrality. They could scarcely fail to foresee what was probable in the future, and which has now actually occurred, and perhaps Colonel Malleon will tell us how, if we had retained Candahar, the plea of neutrality all round could have been maintained, or how we could have rebutted the argument that if we thought proper then to take Candahar, why Russia should not now think proper to take Herat. Colonel Malleon may rely upon it that, at this juncture, the relinquishment of Candahar by us is the most restraining influence that can be brought to bear upon Russia as against her acquisition of the latter city.

Lest it should be supposed by Colonel Malleon, and those who are afflicted with symptoms of obliviousness, that this idea of the necessary maintenance of the neutrality of Afghanistan is new-fangled because it happens to be inconvenient to him, we quote from the opinions of Lord Canning recorded in 1857, when he wrote: "I will go the length of saying that under no circumstances can it, in my opinion, consist with sound policy that the British army should cross the boundary of Afghanistan. It would be presumption to lay this down dogmatically. But I do not hesitate

to declare that I can with difficulty imagine such a contingency ; and that as to adopting the measure for the sake of driving a Persian army from Herat, I should hold it to be an act of the gravest importance.

“ I will very briefly state the grounds upon which I rest this opinion. It is not that I deny it to be important to the British power in India that Herat should be in friendly, or at least not in hostile, hands ; but I believe this to be an object for which it is possible to pay too dearly, and the advantages of which would be perilled by the very means which have been suggested for its attainment.

“ I put out of consideration all question of cost in money, all difficulties incident to the carrying on of a great operation of war at a distance of more than five hundred miles from our frontier, whence every supply must be drawn over a country which could contribute nothing appreciable to the support of a British army. I will not even reckon what the numbers of that army must be in order to make a reverse or check impossible. These are matters which must come into the account more or less heavily, from whatever quarter we may seek to strike a blow at Persia. My objection is that a British force could not march through Afghanistan, carry on operations in that country, *even against a common enemy*, and return within its own territory, without the most serious hazard of a rupture with the Afghans themselves. The seeds of that rupture would be found in the jealousy and hatred with which a large portion of the nation, and that the most warlike, regard us ; in the unavoidable pressure and hardship which the presence of a large army imposes, even upon a friendly country ; in the want of union and subordination among the people themselves ; and in the conflicting interests of the chiefs upon whom, after the Ameer, we should have to depend. Of these differences, already notorious enough, the account of the negotiations and the expressions of anger and bitterness wrung from the Ameer at Peshawur contain remarkable proof. That such a rupture would be imminent, almost from the day on which we set foot in the country, is the opinion of some who know the Afghans best. My own concurrence adds nothing to the testimony ; but I doubt whether anyone who reads the narrative of the late negotiations at Peshawur will consider that opinion groundless, or even exaggerated. If, as was there reluctantly declared to us, the appearance of one or two European officers at Cabul in the Ameer's train is likely to

raise in the minds of his people feelings of suspicion against himself as having sold them, and of vengeance against the Englishman, what would be the prevailing feeling at the presence of a British army traversing the whole breadth of the country for a purpose which must make its stay long and indefinite, and presenting constant points of irritation and collision with every class? Cabul, no doubt, is the focus of Afghan bigotry and antipathy to the English name, but those feelings are not confined to Cabul."

Lord Canning is but additional evidence that in respecting the neutrality of Afghanistan, the Liberal government exhibited not only the highest wisdom, but took the step that was most likely to baffle the ulterior designs of Russia. The real weakness they fell into was the entangling obligation undertaken in consideration of the Ameer holding himself bound not to have any relations whatever with Russia, to guarantee him in the possession of his dominion, the precise boundary of which neither he, nor we, nor anyone else could define. That obligation is at the present moment the greatest difficulty to be surmounted.

CHAPTER X.

THE RUSSIAN ACQUISITION OF MERV.

It required none of the wondrous prevision claimed by the adverse critics to be quite sure that Russia would follow up the conquest of Khiva with that of Merv. On the face of it, it was only a question of time. Not only Merv but the whole strip of territory outside the northern border of Persia from the Caspian to Afghanistan, was manifestly doomed, if it be a doom, for upon that point opinions differ.

Throughout the whole extent of that wild stretch, measuring from west to east about 500 miles, there was a population, partly nomadic, partly settled, inhabiting a country partly desert and partly fertile, both people and country being of a character, both physical and moral, decidedly mixed; slave hunting, and slave dealing, and slave owning being amongst the many other very marked elements of society. Such is the country and such the people (valued clients of Colonel Malleson and his gushing friends) on whose behalf we have been indignantly called upon to break the peace any time these ten years past or more.

We have previously pointed out why this stretch of desert and steppe was not barred from interference by the Gortschakoff despatch. Not to put too fine a point upon it, most of these people were addicted to many petty larcenies and some rather grand ones. They were rough, fierce, and cruel. Like a good many other people, they were conspicuously courageous when they believed themselves opposed to inferior numbers, or inferior men, or inferior equipments, but had a ready facility for running away when they believed the odds were in any respect against them. Living in a country a turn warmer than Khiva, as before described, they still experienced a climate which, by promptly killing off all the weak, only left the seasoned and the hardy to live. A perfect Paradise for natural selection and human development according to the Herbert Spencer school.

No one possessed of fair information about the circumstances can doubt that as soon as the possession of Khiva or its vassalage was

assured, the Russian Governor began to consider of Merv, and all the rest of this interesting slip. It took time to consider it all, and the Russians, not having happened to explore it, took full time prior to commencing operations. When they actually did begin does not much matter, but they began at the Caspian, and gradually moved thence eastward.

It has become the fashion, whether justified or not, to call the Turkomans of this region by the designation of Tekkes, and it has the convenience of distinguishing them from the Turkomans north of Bokhara and elsewhere. These Tekkes are descendants of the Osmanli Mahommetans who conquered Turkey in Europe. They are physically superior to Turkomans in general, and more difficult to cope with. The Russians, therefore, found it not so easy as in some other cases to carry forward their operations. It would serve no instructive purpose to go into numerous details of what was done, but, as a striking example of the kind and magnitude of the resistance offered, the taking of Keok Tepe, a place very near the Persian border, may be referred to at some length.

Keok Tepe was first of all approached by the Russians early in 1879 by a force under General Lomakine, who, after a severe battle, had to retreat. In 1880, the command had been taken by General Skobelev, who expressly secured the assistance and co-operation of General Kourapatkin. The former devoted himself to the personal superintendence of the men; the latter was chiefly engaged in the mechanical contrivances of the siege which had to be undertaken.

The Tekkes, being defeated and pursued in detail for a considerable distance from the west, arrived and collected to the number of 40,000 at Keok Tepe, where they formed a camp, with tents pitched close, each against its neighbour. There were amongst them two distinguished chiefs, one being Macdum Kuli Khan and the other Tekme Sardar.

This last had on a former occasion further west made his submission to the before mentioned General Lomakine, but, being dissatisfied with the treatment he received, he again joined his own people in resisting Russia. Being a man of discernment, he had, while attached to Lomakine's division, observed so closely the manner adopted by the Russians for making earthworks, that he was bent upon using the experience he had thus gained. Under his instructions, therefore, the Tekkes build around their tents a

huge clay wall which is said to have reminded the Russians on seeing it of an immense railway embankment.

The wall thus rapidly and effectively built, converted the fragile encampment into a very formidable stronghold. The constant firing of nine guns upon the wall for a month was barely sufficient to make a breach. During that time it is estimated that 500 shots were fired into the place, and that the ammunition expended reached 70,000 rounds. The sufferings of the besieged must have been fearful, and those of the besiegers were scarcely less formidable, for they were not prepared for such prolonged operations, and exposure to the depth of winter subjected them to desperate privations which must have resulted in numberless unrecorded deaths.

It seemed that Keok Tepe was going to baffle the utmost efforts of the Russians a second time, but Skobelev bore up against every trial and discouragement, exerted his personal influence to preserve discipline, to promote a degree of cheerful recklessness of life amongst his men, and to fortify them in every way against any idea of submitting to defeat. Kouropatkin seconded the efforts of his chief by exhibiting the utmost coolness and courage in the most advanced positions, and by applying his knowledge and scientific skill to the progress of the works.

Finding that the ordinary approaches resorted to in a siege were ineffectual, it was at length determined to sink a mine of extraordinary proportions, extending under the earthwork rampart. Skobelev's self-imposed duty was to sit at the mouth of the mine and keep a sharp eye upon all that went on. He took strict account of the time occupied by the sappers in detail. If a given amount of progress exceeded that prescribed, the officer in charge was kissed and caressed, and not infrequently treated to champagne or even something more strongly indicative of approbation; if the progress fell short of the estimate the responsible person was vigorously abused in presence of his comrades, and ordered into an inferior position.

After prodigious labours conducted in this fashion the mine was pronounced complete. More than a ton of gunpowder was deposited at the head of it, and when it was fired a vast mass of the rampart was blown in heaps, a great breach was effected, and while the besieged were in all the agonies of its immediate effect upon them, the Russians swarmed in and carried everything before them.

The besiegers had waited and endured, watched and suffered

GENERAL SKOBELFF.



toiled and sworn vengeance for a month. Upon gaining the breach all their worst passions were let loose. There was indiscriminate slaughter without regard to age or sex. There was some resistance for a time, but it soon ceased, and the only object then of the besieged was to effect a desperate escape. They crowded out in disorder and terror, women and children mingled with men, fleeing towards Merv across a bleak and hopeless desert. They were pursued with the utmost perseverance, and cut down without mercy, artillery and mitrailleurs mowing them down by hundreds until they lay in heaps.

There were 6,500 dead bodies within the wall, and it is estimated that 8,000 of the fugitives were slain. According to the most highly coloured accounts, many of the women were ravished and afterwards sabred by the ravishers, but the official records assert that not a woman was dishonoured. It is to be feared that the official account must give way to the other. A moderate amount of affirmative evidence in such a case is enough to destroy any quantity of negative assertion.

The total loss of the Tekkes in killed from first to last is estimated at 20,000, or about half of the number of those who were originally besieged. Many of the rest, who attained to temporary safety by flight, were no doubt starved to death in the desert. To accomplish the ghastly work it is said that the Russians in the assault and pursuit fired 273,804 infantry rounds, 12,510 being fired by the cavalry and 5,864 rounds by the artillery—a prodigious amount of heavy firing being thus implied. There were also 224 rockets thrown, so that the mere making of the breach was but a small matter in comparison with the cost and carnage of what succeeded.

After the saturnalia of revenge came that of plunder and debauchery, or rather, they ran somewhat together; for, notwithstanding the fearful slaughter the first day, the Russian soldiers relieved their intervals of heavy drinking with cutting down every remaining Tekke who came in their way for three days afterwards, while plundering was resorted to without a thought of mitigating it.

It was well for the future success of Russia that, in defiance of the savage energy of the massacre, the darkness of the first night enabled so many to escape. They carried with them news that spread universal terror of the Russian name, and from that time almost all opposition was given up in despair.

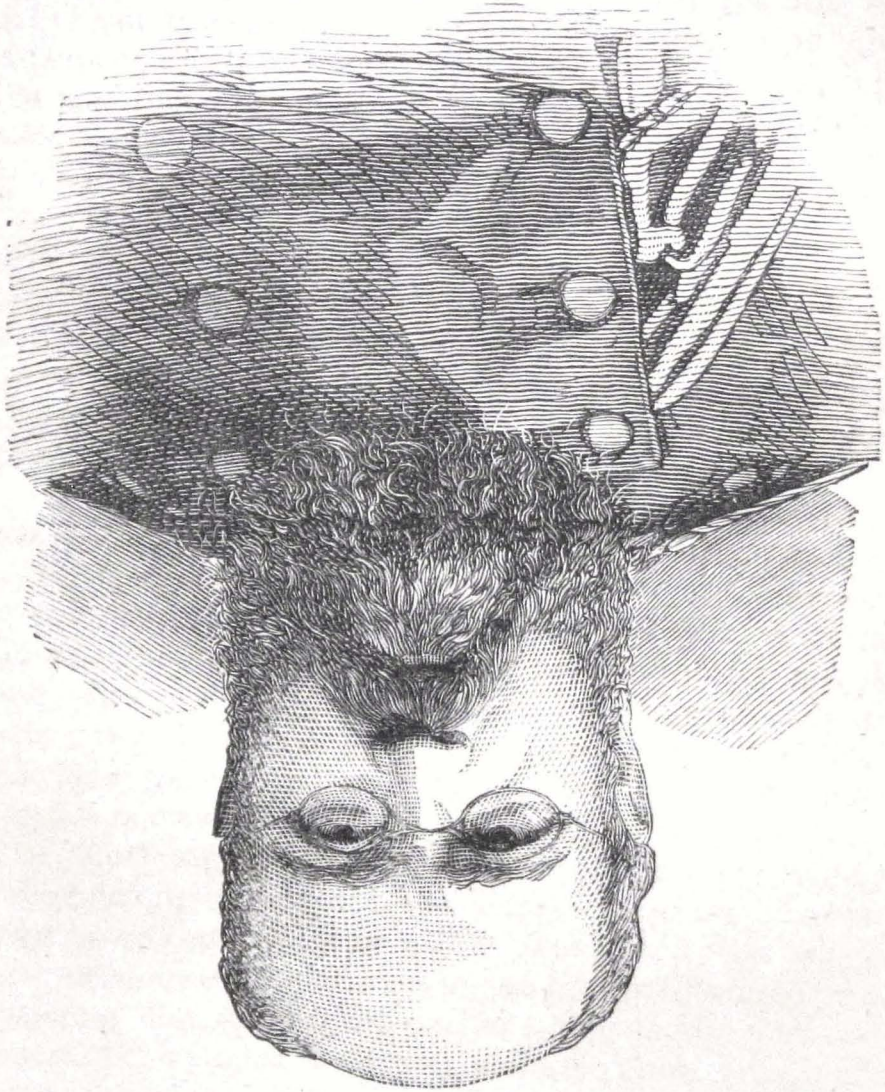
Notwithstanding the previous subjugation of Khiva, the Tekke

district, especially the east end of it, was afterwards regarded by many politicians as an effectual barrier between Russia and Afghanistan. Not long before the taking of Keok Tepe, the Marquis of Salisbury, in the House of Lords, committed himself to the confident expression of opinion that the barrier would endure long enough to last his time. Almost before the ink was dry that printed his speech, that barrier was shattered for ever. Whether it was wise to rely upon it as he did; whether it was courageous to rely upon it and to make so much of it either before or after it was shattered; are questions which can scarcely be answered in the affirmative. Calm reliance upon the consciousness of our vast resources—manly confidence in our determination to hold our own when our own is really assailed—should prevent indulgence in the childish exhibitions of temper and apprehension which have been so rife all through this humiliating business. For it is humiliating to us as a nation that there are so many craven cowards ready to go into hysterical convulsions because a strip of desert and a few thousand semi-barbarians, in which and in whom we have no concern, are brought under the benefits as well as the endurance of Russian rule.

Looking at the barbarous cruelty which marks the forward steps of Russia, as illustrated in the preceding pages, it is not gratifying to have to admit that any advantages whatever can accrue. But the admission must be made however distasteful it may be. As soon as some semblance of order was restored at Keok Tepe, Skobelev pushed on to Askabad, the capital of the Tekkes. The prophets said he would immediately take Merv, but they were wrong for once, or perhaps it might be more appropriate to say not for the first or last time. Skobelev sent on Kouropatkin to reconnoitre. He advanced about half way to Merv, but soon returned, with what report is not known. The taking of Merv was to be afterwards accomplished in a manner calculated to astonish the prophets.

The building of a fort, and the establishment of a permanent military station at Askabad was the immediate duty which Skobelev set himself to do. Having done that, he soon afterwards retired to St. Petersburg, General Komaroff afterwards succeeding to the command. Probably neither of these guessed until afterwards how completely the spirit of the Tekkes had been broken by the fate of Keok Tepe. The full fruits of that advantage to Russia had yet to be appreciated. For the present they determined to adopt tactics of the very contrary description.

GENERAL KOMAROFF.



The policy adopted was a commercial one. As soon as the fort at Askabad was finished a bazaar was erected, and every effort made to promote business in it on a large scale. Armenians were invited and came, fitting up stores of goods which proved very attractive for hundreds of miles round. By degrees the place got the reputation of being the best market in all that region for miscellaneous merchandise. Before long it became well known at Merv that it was so. By degrees the Merves resorted to Askabad; first in twos and threes of apprehensive people, but, finding they got a specially cordial reception from merchants and military alike, the numbers increased until systematic intercourse and trading relations were established between the two places. The most opulent of the people of Merv eventually joining in the peaceful and increasing throng.

Events thus spontaneously ripened. Traders wanted to extend their operations to Merv. Komaroff wanted to obtain a survey of Merv and its district. A caravan was organised, led by the representative of Severin Beg, the head of a great trading house at Moscow. This leader's name was Kosikh. He had already established personal relationships with many Merv people of distinction, and further acquaintance was desired on either side.

Alikhanoff was a young officer who had greatly distinguished himself in the siege of Keok Tepe. He was selected to accompany the caravan, ostensibly as clerk to Kosikh, but really as secret agent of Komaroff. The caravan started for Merv in February, 1882, and performed the journey of 232 miles in six stages, extending over a day each. Alikhanoff made surveys and observations of the country passed through, entered Merv at nightfall, and encamped in the midst of the Tekkes without any suspicion as to who he was or why he was there.

Next morning, as soon as the arrival was known, there was a great stir amongst the Merves, and considerable anger on the part of some, for they were exceedingly jealous of anything savouring of intrusion. But the astute Kosikh was equal to the occasion, and Alikhanoff, being well acquainted with the Tekke language, acted as interpreter, and was ostensibly nothing else.

Between them they contrived to convene a meeting of the leading men of the city, which assembled amid intense popular excitement. Had all the truth been known, it would probably have been fatal to the whole party of visitors. Kosikh, extending to everyone his

hands, which were shaken very unwillingly, sat down, as befits a rich Russian merchant, side by side with Makdum Kuli. Ali-khanoff, as interpreter, sat on a felt at the entrance. The silence continued. Waiting some time for someone to speak, he decided to break it himself. "I, therefore," he says, "commenced with something like the following harangue :

"From the letters you have received, you doubtless know the aim of our journey. My master, Severin Beg, is a rich Russian merchant. He enjoys the greatest respect of our authorities, and hence they instructed him to give their *salaam* to the people of Merv. Deciding to establish commercial intercourse with you, Severin Beg has come here to find out, on the spot, whether he can buy and sell in your market. The Russian Government fully sympathises with this action, since it anticipates from it mutual advantages so desirable for the friendly and peaceful relations of neighbours. Thus, the sole object of our journey here is trade, and we should like to know what your views are upon the point, and how you mean to regard it.'

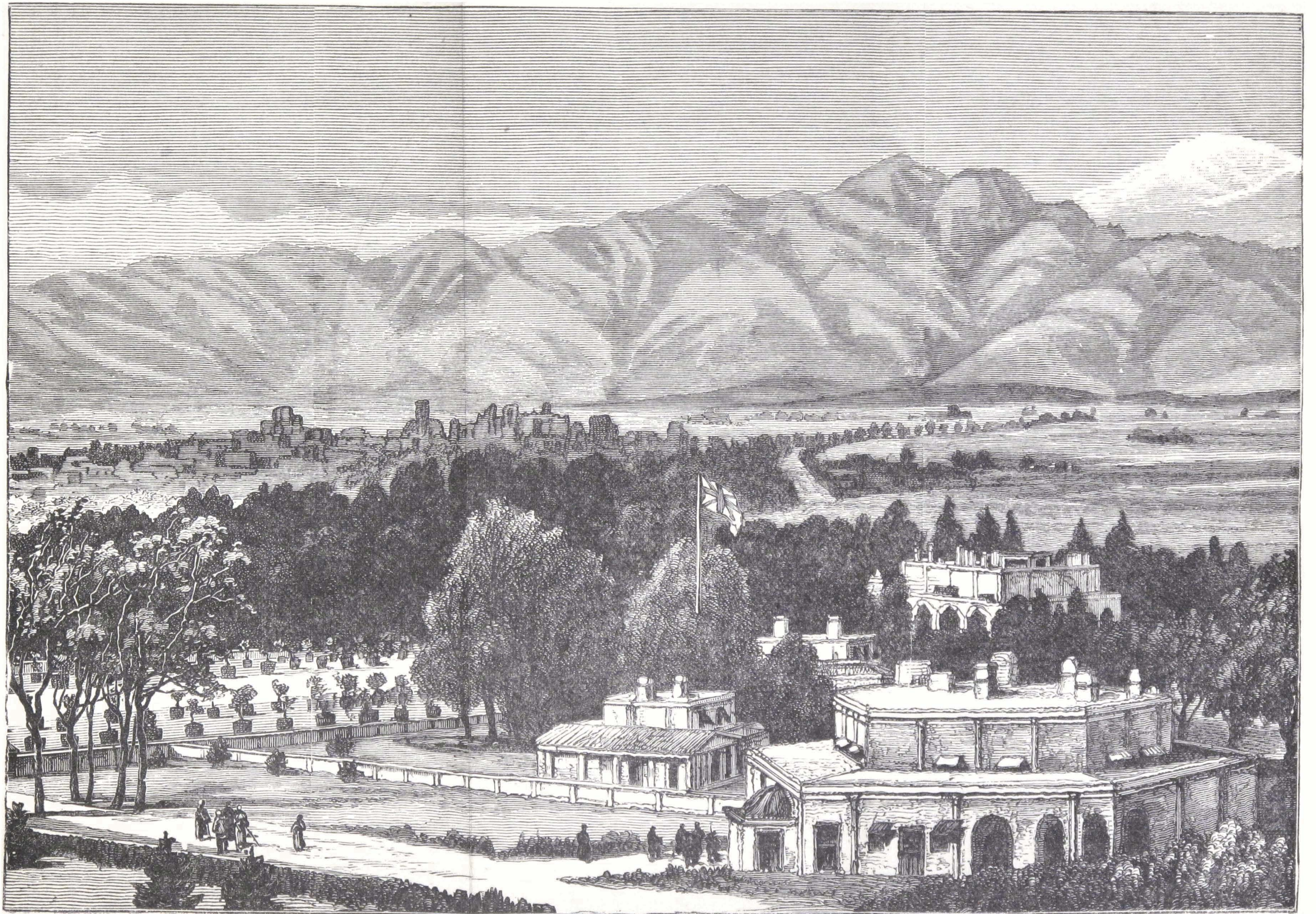
"Another prolonged silence, broken at last by an old man, who said,

"Commerce is a good thing, but we fear to draw upon us the responsibility which will arise if any attack is made upon you by those bad men who exist among us, as everywhere. Go back to Askabad to negotiate with our delegates. Fix our relations, and when both peoples are united, trade as much as you like, &c.' (of an equally evasive character).

"I tell you we are traders,' I rejoined; 'it is not our affair to join or disunite peoples. For that, apply to the Russian government; send it your envoys, if you like. As regards us, there is nothing undetermined in our relations. The Russians are at peace with you. The Askabad bazaar is filled with traders from Merv. We did not see, therefore, any reason why we should not come here, and hence resolved to come. Give us a decided answer. Will you let us unpack and commence trade, or do you demand our return? But mind, I warn you beforehand that your action will be viewed in its proper light, if you close to Russians alone that route which is freely made use of by the rest of our neighbours.'

"Again a profound silence, broken at last by a discussion of the chiefs as to whether delegates should be sent to Askabad or not.

"We don't value the trade of Merv so much as all that,' I said



RAWUL PINDI, THE MEETING-PLACE OF THE AMEER AND THE VICEROY,

at last, 'we are not disposed to waste our time running backwards and forwards. If we go back this time without selling our goods, you won't see our faces any more. I should like to ask you to tell me whether you assemble and debate every time a caravan arrives, or only do this to the Russians?'

"'No, we would not assemble thus,' replied an elder. 'If anybody were to fall upon the caravan of any other country, if they were to rob it before my eyes, I would not even wink. We are not afraid of them; but we don't want anything to happen to you, the merchants of the great Padishah.'

"'The people are ready to obey us,' added Kara Kuli Khan; 'we have no doubts on that score. But there are not a few *kaltamans* in the oasis—robbers from whom we ourselves are not safe. They might fall on your packs, and on you yourselves.'

"'If we do not meet with any hostility on the part of the people,' I replied, 'we will answer for the rest. Our arms and our escort will keep the robbers in order.'

"Again a profound silence. Makdum Kuli exchanged significant glances with his neighbours.

"'I have said all I have to say,' I continued; 'we will now await your answer. If it be the same as before, we shall prepare for the journey back to Askabad.'

"I felt sure that the previous answer would not be repeated.

"After another discussion, Makdum Kuli said:—'Tell the trader, that we are only influenced by fears for his safety; otherwise, we have nothing against him, and he may stop here for ever, if he likes.'

"'God forbid!' I replied. 'It will be quite enough to stop here two or three market days to see what your trade is.'

"'In that case, here is our answer,' said Makdum Kuli. 'Let him remain here two or three market days, and afterwards return to Askabad with the delegates.'"

We desire especially to direct attention to the distinct record in this conversation of the fact that the Merves themselves admitted the country to be in such a lawless state that a caravan could not be expected to traverse it with safety. One of the adverse critics of Russia has gone out of his way to try and prove to the contrary. He wants to show that the Russians were resorting to a false plea when they justified their occupation of Merv by pointing to the existence of lawless robbers, who must needs be put down, for he denies the serious existence of the robbers. This conversation sets

that point at rest for ever. If the Russians wanted that justification for advancing, they had it to the full measure, as thus proved.

Alikhanoff contrived to stay unsuspected at Merv for a fortnight, making friends. Disguised as a Tekke, he stole out before sunrise and made minute examinations of all the surroundings, and especially of the fortress. As additional evidence of lawlessness and the inability of such authority as there was to cope with it, his life was plotted against, and the departure of the caravan was hastened by the chiefs because they were too conscious of being powerless to protect it.

Afterwards, Makdum Kuli, the heroic defender of Keok Tepe, was induced to accept office under Russia, and materially aided in forwarding events. He was invited to Moscow and was there at the time of the Czar's coronation. Upon his return in a handsome Russian uniform, he exercised immense influence at Merv, and the end of it all was that Merv was ceded to Russia by the signature of the chiefs upon a parchment document formulated for the purpose. Twenty-four of the principal chiefs immediately proceeded to Askabad, where, in the drawing-room of General Komaroff, they took the oath of allegiance to the Czar.

A Russian army soon afterwards occupied Merv, where a fort was built. There were hostile demonstrations against the Russian army, but they were of little importance, and Russia has held the position with ease ever since.

That the most unscrupulous representations were made to the chiefs of Merv, no one will doubt. It is likely that every device, fair or unfair, was resorted to in the way of diplomacy. The whole business is an apt warning to be always on guard in dealing with Russia. It is our own fault if we are not, but that is no reason why bloodshed should have been considered preferable at Merv, or why we should refrain from binding Russia to covenants on the plea that they may very likely be disregarded. It is for us to see that the covenants are just and unequivocal, and then we shall never fail to stand by them in any extremity.

This brings us to the consideration of the steps taken to arrive at an agreement, through the medium of a joint commission, upon the actual boundary in dispute. To avoid any prejudice or appearance of partiality in dealing with that point, we avail ourselves of the matter published by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which cannot be accused of undue leanings in extenuation of the proceedings of Russia.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION, AND THE CONFERENCE BETWEEN
THE AMEER AND THE VICEROY.

AFTER Merv had annexed itself to the Russian Empire the English Government made representations at St. Petersburg concerning the consequences which would follow from this latest extension of the Russian Empire, which brought the dominions of the Czar for the first time into immediate proximity to those of the Ameer of Afghanistan.

Previously to the annexation, Russia had proposed (having regard to the British arrangement with Abdur Rahman) to have the precise boundary of the Afghan region exclusively under English influence accurately marked off, for the avoidance of disputes and the establishment of a good and clear understanding as to where the north-western frontier of Afghanistan really runs. This proposal was rejected by England, under the influence of those who feared that such a timely demarcation would give an indirect sanction to Russian extension up to the line of delimitation.

The jealousy with which the annexation of Merv was regarded in this country may be inferred from the regret so cynically expressed by Sir Henry Rawlinson in the *Nineteenth Century*, that England was remiss in not supplying the Tekkes with arms and powder to oppose the Russian advance, in not compelling Persia to refuse to assist the Russian army with transport and supplies, and finally in not making the voluntary submission of the Merv elders a *casus belli*. Such cynical reflections naturally generated considerable soreness between the two Governments, and when in March, 1884, Sir Edward Thornton made representations to M. de Giers concerning the English view of the incorporation of Merv, he did not find the Russian Government disposed to enter into the question. "What propositions," asked our Ambassador, "do you propose to make?" "None at all," replied in effect the Russian Minister about three weeks later; but he referred back to a proposal which England had rejected two years before. The English ministers took a month

to think over the matter, and then, in the first week in May, they sent a formal proposal to St. Petersburg that the Afghan frontier, "from Khojah Saleh westward"—no point whatever west of Khojah Saleh being mentioned, no allusion to Sarakhs, or the neighbourhood of Sarakhs, appears in the official communication of the English Government on which the Joint Commission was issued. The Government proposed that the principal parts of the boundary line should be laid down on the spot by a Joint Commission composed of one Russian, one Englishman, and one Afghan. The Russian Government in reply congratulated Lord Granville on the prospect of a definitive settlement, accepted the proposal that the boundary should be laid down by a Joint Commission on the spot, but firmly refused to admit the title of Afghanistan to be represented on the Commission. Afghanistan was expressly forbidden to have any relations whatever with Russia. How, then, could she send a Commissioner to discuss on equal terms with the representatives of England and Russia? The British Commissioner, of course, could consult a representative of the Ameer as often as he pleased, just as Russia could consult representatives of any of the independent Turkoman tribes who lay within the sphere of her influence; but such representatives could only be experts useful for consultation, not Commissioners with power to decide. The justice of this being obvious, the English Government waived the point about the Afghan Commissioner.

The English Government thus adopted in May as its own the Russian proposal of March, and both countries stood committed to the settlement of all disputed points on the north-west frontier by a Joint Commission on the spot. This arrangement was regarded with no good will by the representatives of our Forward School, both in India and at home. They insisted that it was a great mistake to allow Russia any voice in the matter. The Ameer should fix his own boundary in conjunction with England. It was true that in the previous July he had so little knowledge as to what that boundary was as to ask for a map showing him where it lay, and we had sent him a map showing the boundary as far north as Sarakhs and Sari-Yazi, but we had been careful to warn him that so little was known of the region that it was impossible to regard any map as authoritative—an official admission of the baselessness of most of the arguments used by the advocates of war. The Ameer, however, encouraged by the map, began to bestir himself. In 1883

he threw a strong force into Bala Murghab, a frontier stronghold which, although often left without a garrison, had admittedly been occasionally in the effective possession of Shere Ali.

Soon afterwards M. de Giers, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, sent for Sir Edward Thornton, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, and gravely protested against the proposal to substitute the seizure of strong positions by Afghan troops for the deliberations of the Joint Commission, to which it had been agreed to refer the question of the line of frontier. The Imperial Cabinet, said M. de Giers, had received reports from the Transcaspian province that it was the intention of Abdur Rahman Khan to seize Penj-deh and other strong positions beyond the limits within which either Dost Mahommed or Shere Ali had exercised any authority. He would therefore remind the English Government that according to the terms of the arrangement of 1872-3, by which Russia had agreed to recognise Badakshan and Wakhan as within the limits of Afghanistan, on the express understanding that England would use her undoubted influence in order to restrain the Ameer from extending his dominions beyond the territories in effective possession of Shere Ali and Dost Mahommed, and especially to induce him to refrain from aggression on the independent Turkoman tribes beyond his frontier, the Russian Government expected that the Ameer would be restrained from any act of aggression on Penj-deh. Penj-deh, we may add, had been occupied by the independent tribe of Afghan Turkomans since 1857. Neither Dost Mahommed nor Shere Ali nor Abdur Rahman had ever exercised any authority over these wild marauders. No Afghan dare ever show his face in Penj-deh. Nothing is more uncontrovertibly established than the fact that, whatever may have been the claim of Herat to the land of Penj-deh before 1857, no Afghan from that date to the date of the Russian protest had ever exercised any effective authority over the independent Turkomans who lived in that oasis.

Penj-deh was perhaps the most important point, and one of the most debated points, in all the debateable land. Not only was it important as being an oasis near the junction of two rivers, but it was the first place where any large settlement of Turkomans was to be found beyond the limits of Afghan jurisdiction. The Afghans, under a baneful impulsion, determined to seize it. At that time there was not a Russian soldier nearer than Merv. The Saryks of Youletan, headed by their Khan, had gone on a pilgrimage to Askabad to ask

to become Russian subjects. They had received a somewhat rough welcome, being told that Russia did not care for them and their worthless territory, but that if they would behave themselves Russia would look after them. There was not the least sign of any intention on the part of Russia to send a single Cossack into the disputed territory. She had a mere handful of men at Merv and a few at Sarakhs. Everything was left to the decision of the Commission. But the most ill-advised advance of the Afghans to Penj-deh changed everything. The Saryks at Penj-deh were chastised, and a strong Afghan garrison established in the midst of a population that for thirty years had only recognised the Afghans as an hereditary foe. The commotion excited throughout the whole debateable land was enormous. The Salors and the Saryks had it that the Afghans and the English were going to establish Afghan garrisons over the Turkomans as far north as Sarakhs, and who knows what else? So great was the excitement—and the fierce tribes on the border are not to be trifled with—the Russians found it necessary to hurry up some troops to be ready for emergencies, and to stand on guard against a breach of the peace. But it was not until months later—that is to say, in October—that the first Russian soldier entered the debateable land, when they occupied Pul-i-khatun. No subsequent advance was made that was not provoked by the movements of Afghan troops north of Penj-deh, in face of the clearest warnings as to the necessity that would thereby be created for a Russian advance to the southern limit of the debateable land.

About midsummer, the English Government having waived the demand that the Afghans should form part of the Commission, the Russian Government set to work in earnest to arrive at an agreement as to the general basis of principle which should govern the proceedings of the Commission. It suggested that the Commission should be guided by the agreement embodied in Prince Gortschakoff's despatch of January 12, 1873—namely, that no territory should be reckoned as forming part of Afghanistan or of the dependencies of Herat which had not been in October, 1872, in the effective possession of Shere Ali and Dost Mahommed. Further, as Khojah Saleh was the only fixed point on the new frontier, and as there was little dispute as to the line of frontier from Khojah Saleh to the Murghab, Russia suggested that the Commission should take the nearest end first, and start from Khojah Saleh and work westward. England,

however, was inexorable, and Russia at last waived her proposal and consented that the Commission should begin at the Heri-rud and end its work at Khojah Saleh.

Sir Peter Lumsden's appointment was gazetted on July 17. He was instructed to repair to Sarakhs to meet the Russian Commissioner on October 1-13, and proceed with him to draw the frontier which, taking into account all the local circumstances, would be most likely to give an assured peace to the borders. He was specifically instructed to adjudicate as to the Afghan title to Penj-deh, a summary of the case in favour of its Afghan character which had been got ready the previous year by our agents was given him, and he was further informed that even if the Afghan claim, based on the alleged payment of taxes or rent and the appointment of Naibs *in partibus* or otherwise, should appear to him to be historically justified, he was free to draw the frontier north or south of Penj-deh in accordance with his judgment as to the line that would best conduce to the tranquillity of Central Asia and the peace and security of Afghanistan.

Russia about the middle of August sent a strong Memorandum to London urging that the Joint Commission could only succeed if there was a preliminary agreement arrived at as to the principle of delimitation, and she again set forth her conception of the proper basis—namely, the territory in effective occupation of Shere Ali and Dost Mahommed. It was true that in the case of Balkh and five other places she had waived this principle in 1873. But the reason why she was unable to be equally complaisant about Penj-deh was because the Saryks, the hereditary enemies of Merv, and belonging to the Russian sphere of action, had submitted to the Russian Government, which had promised to protect them on condition that they refrained from pillage and murder. Russia, for the sake of the peace of Merv and her own territory, was resolved to compel them to keep their promises, but she could only do this when the whole of the Saryk tribe was under her protection.

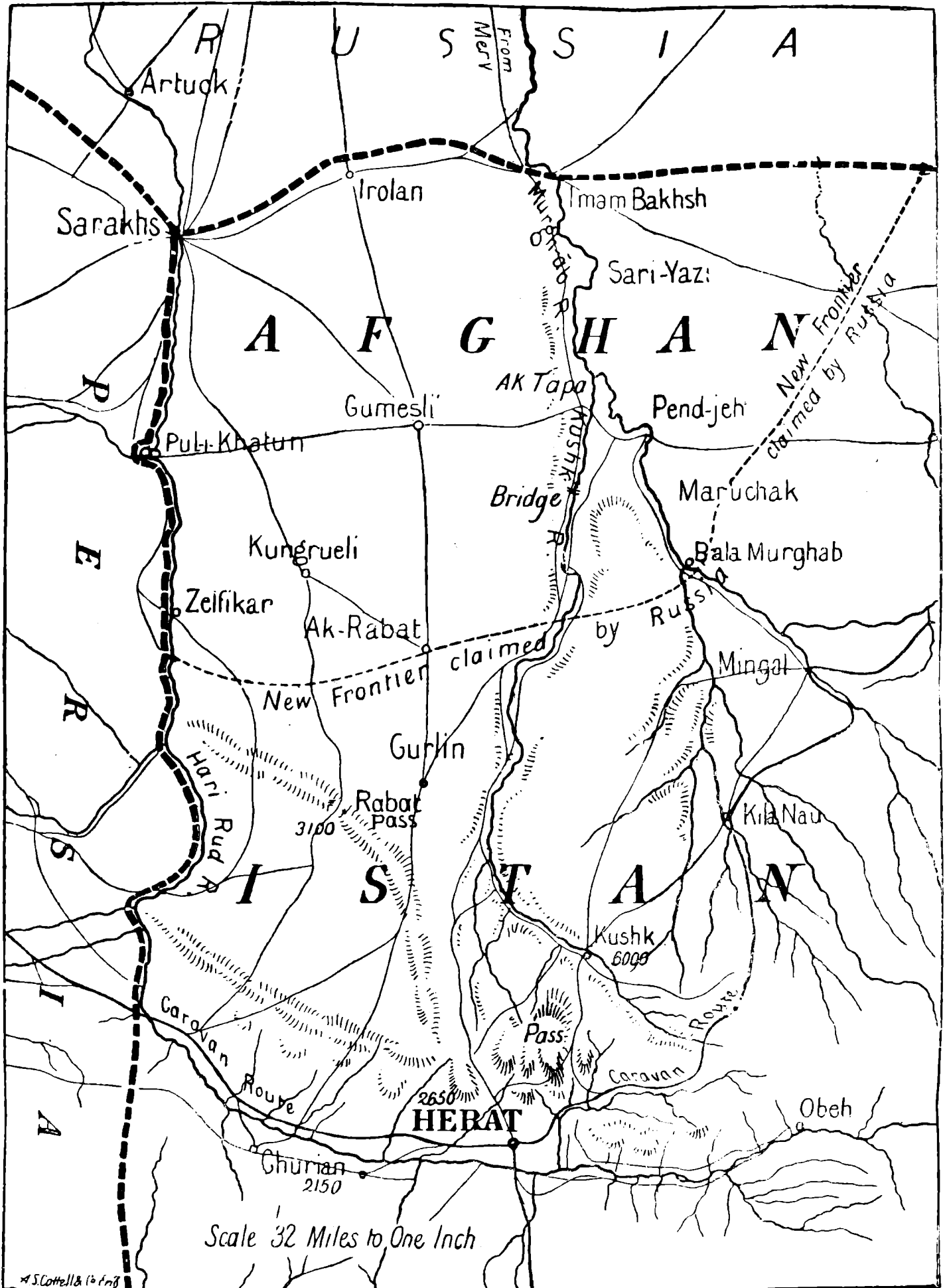
To this England replied, giving an absolute refusal to say anything whatever. The Commissioners were to meet and decide everything on the spot, and towards the end of August Russia was formally notified that Sir Peter Lumsden had been appointed, and would start in September for Sarakhs, where, together with his Russian colleague, he would lay down the true limits of Afghanistan, taking into consideration the political relations between the tribes, and taking care

not to saddle the Afghans with burdens which the Ameer neither wished for nor was able to bear.

Perhaps there is nothing on record to surpass the cool audacity of this last suggestion. It amounts to an attempt to arrange that Afghanistan should retain all the valuable spots that the Ameer really cares to have, but to throw the worthless, and those that were likely to be a burden to him, at the head of Russia, and to hold that country responsible for keeping the peace where the Ameer had so notoriously failed.

At the beginning of September the news of the Afghan seizure of Penj-deh reached St. Petersburg. The Russian Government protested once more—for the third time—against these aggressions by the Afghans on independent Turkoman tribes beyond the frontier and warned the English Government with unmistakable directness of speech that such aggression on the part of the Afghans could not fail to neutralise the effect of the conciliatory intention of the two Powers, and create grave obstacles to the success of the delimitation. Nevertheless, out of regard to the desire of the two Governments to arrive at an amicable arrangement, the Russian Government consented to appoint General Zelenoy with instructions to agree upon such a frontier with Sir Peter Lumsden as would avoid misunderstandings and complications in the future relations of Russia and Afghanistan, taking into account in the delimitation both the geographical and ethnographical conditions of the zone. At the same time (evidently in reply to the audacious suggestion before remarked upon) the Russian Government politely but firmly repudiated any claim on the part of the Afghans to be regarded as decisive authorities as to the Afghan character of any particular point on the frontier.

General Zelenoy meanwhile was unpatriotic enough to fall ill at Tiflis, and his illness threw everything into confusion. About a fortnight before the Commissioners should have met at Sarakhs, M. de Giers informed Sir Edward Thornton that it was unfortunately impossible for General Zelenoy to be there at the time appointed, and the preparations necessary to carry out the survey could not be completed until December, when it would be too late to begin work. He therefore proposed that the date of meeting should be postponed till the end of January, at Pul-i-khatun, instead of Sarakhs, owing to the danger of marching through the Salor Turkomans, who were much excited by the recent movements of Afghan troops in the



MAP SHOWING THE APPROXIMATE BOUNDARY ARISING OUT OF THE RUSSIAN CONTENTION. (See Chapter XI.)

debateable land. The numbers of the respective escorts should be identical.

Owing, however, to the local excitement, of which no one here could form any idea, M. de Giers went on to say that as the two Governments had arranged that all questions upon which their Commissioners could not agree should be referred to St. Petersburg and London for settlement, it would remove a great danger in the way of the survey if the two Governments could agree beforehand within what zone their Commissioners should confine their surveys for the delimitation of the frontier. The English Government replied, insisting on Sarakhs as the place of meeting, and urging the Russian Government to send their Commissioner before winter. The Russian Government replied that the Commission might meet at Sarakhs, but north of Pul-i-khatun—which had been occupied in October by a small Russian force, as a reply to the Afghan seizure of Penj-deh—the Commission must trust solely to a Russian escort. But it repeated more urgently than before the plea for the definition of the zone of survey, pointing out that a preliminary agreement as to the district to be surveyed in no way prejudiced the decision as to the frontier line, but merely circumscribed discussion within the narrowest possible limits. The English Government waited a month, and then said that, while accepting the definition of a zone of survey in principle, it must relegate to the Commissioners on the spot the decision as to what the zone should be.

Towards the end of November the Russian Government pressed more urgently than ever for a definition of the zone before the commission began its labours. If, for instance, General Zelenoy wished to carry the survey as far south as Kusan, and Sir Peter Lumsden refused, the difference of opinion after a dispute on the spot would be referred home. Would it not be wiser to decide in advance what limits should be assigned to the survey, and so obviate disputes which might be dangerous? General Zelenoy proposed, and the Russian Government adopted his suggestion, that the zone of survey should be confined to the district between Sarakhs on the north and the Borkhut Mountains or the Paropamisus on the south. To this the English Government objected. It had no objection to begin at Sarakhs, but it objected to allow the zone of survey to go so far south as the Paropamisus. In this despatch for the first time the English Government intimated that it did not agree that Pul-i-

khatun and Penj-deh were outside Afghanistan, but it considered that these questions should be decided by Commissioners on the spot.

Thus it was not till Christmas that the Russian Government received a definite rejection of the proposed zone of survey. On learning, for the first time, that the English Government did not regard Penj-deh and Pul-i-khatun as outside the territory of Afghanistan it became necessary for Russia to explain what she regarded as the territory of Afghanistan. That was the origin of M. Lessar's visit to London. He came over to explain, define, and defend the Russian view of the true frontier, not in order to supersede the enquiries of a Commission on the spot, but only to reply at first hand to the denial by the English Government that Penj-deh and Pul-i-khatun were outside Afghanistan. M. Lessar's definition of frontier was received early in February, and the reply seems to have been sent on March 14. In it, Lord Granville, reverting to the old suggestion of a zone, this time proposed for the southern line the frontier claimed by Russia, and for the northern that which England held to form the proper boundary between Russia and Afghanistan—namely, a line drawn from Shir-tepe, on the Heri-rud, twelve miles below Pul-i-khatun (that is, twelve miles nearer Sarakhs) to Shri-yazi, on the Murghab. This was the old Russian idea of a zone of survey, definitely rejected by Lord Granville last autumn and now adopted as his own in March. The debateable land would thus be narrowed down to an exceedingly narrow strip of territory. It is to be deeply regretted that the spirit of wisdom which seemed to animate Earl Granville in 1872-3 was not very clearly manifested from the commencement of these later negotiations. Probably the difference is mainly owing to the embarrassments caused by the ill-judged undertaking to preserve to the Ameer his territory, in defiance of the merits of the case.

While these matters were receiving anxious attention, the newly installed Governor-General of India, Lord Dufferin (successor to Lord Ripon), arranged to receive in conference by invitation the Ameer, Abdur Rahman, at Rawul Pindi, a British military station in the Punjab, very near the Afghan border, and not far from the Khyber Pass. The date appointed for the arrival of the Ameer was the 30th of March, in disregard of a rainy season being then due. The Duke and Duchess of Connaught were included in Lord Dufferin's party.

The Ameer arrived by special train from Peshawur at 8 on the morning of the 31st. His punctuality, in spite of his indisposition and the bad roads, created a favourable impression. He was received on alighting by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, the General of the Rawul Pindi Division and the Commissioners. A guard of honour of the Irish Fusiliers was drawn up on the platform and saluted him as he alighted.

The Ameer was described as a stout, unwieldy figure, with broad heavy features, wholly distinct from the Jewish type possessed by Shere Ali's branch of the family. He was dressed in a blue undress military coat of European pattern, with a gray sheepskin Turkestan hat, and wore two stars on the left breast. He suffered from the gout, and walked lame. Wet weather marred the ceremony arranged for the reception. There was a heavy storm the night before, and rain was falling when the Ameer arrived. He elected to go in the carriage which the Viceroy had thoughtfully sent, and a previously arranged procession of 56 elephants was abandoned. A salute of 21 guns was fired when the carriage started, and another salute by a second battery of horse artillery announced that the destination had been reached. The Duke of Connaught, who, with the Duchess, arrived the previous night, saw the procession pass from the club stand. A deputation, consisting of the foreign secretary and the private and military secretaries to the Viceroy and two aides-de-camp, received the Ameer at his residence on the part of Lord Dufferin.

The Ameer's troops arrived in a special train during the previous night. Before the procession reached the Ameer's residence two troops of his cavalry, one being Uzbegs, raced down from their camp along a portion of the route in a wild, disorderly manner, whirling their whips, and formed line on the roadside, beyond the native contingents who lined the last portion of the way. They presented a dirty, ragged appearance, contrasting most unfavourably with the cavalry of the contingent.

It was recorded that : " Except Gholam Hyder Chiraki, his Commander-in-Chief, the Ameer has no high officers. He trusts no one, except, perhaps, his cook, called "ralla," or "the manager." He will not eat food cooked by any other person."

He expressed himself pleased with his reception and the accommodation arranged for him. His personal staff of servants were encamped in the grounds ; his officials and khans, with his infantry,

numbering 205 men, and a battery of artillery, in the adjoining field; his cavalry, numbering 386, on the police parade ground, half a mile distant. His military following amounted to 770 men, among whom were 16 heliographers, equipped in the same way as our own men.

The previous night's rain had so damaged the tent in which a durbar was to be held, and the weather continued so unfavourable that the durbar was postponed until the 8th of April.

The Ameer paid a visit to the Viceroy on the evening of the day of his arrival, and was much impressed with his reception. The next day Lord Dufferin returned the Ameer's visit, the Duke of Connaught and a small staff accompanying him. The weather continued unfavourable, with but little prospect of improvement.

On the 6th of April a grand review was held of all the troops and native contingents, in the presence of the Viceroy, the Ameer, the Duke of Connaught, a glittering staff, and all the native chiefs. It was one of the finest military spectacles ever seen in India. The appearance of the troops was splendid, and the Ameer was greatly impressed. The march past continued for two hours. In the evening, at a banquet given by Lord Dufferin in honour of the Ameer, the Viceroy proposed Abdur Rahman's health. The Ameer replied in a brief speech, wishing prosperity to the British Government and to Afghanistan, and honour to all who serve the Queen. "Might her Army," he added, "ever be victorious!" The Viceroy afterwards called for three cheers for the Ameer.

On the 8th, the grand durbar in honour of the Ameer's visit was held and passed off admirably. The scene was a brilliant and impressive one. The Ameer sat on the right of the Viceroy on a daïs, the Duke of Connaught occupying a seat on his Excellency's left. After the offering of presents, the Ameer made a speech, in which he said that he was obliged for the favours bestowed upon him by the Queen and the Viceroy, and in return would render every possible service as regarded his army or his people. "As the British," continued the Ameer, "have declared that they will help Afghanistan in beating off external enemies, the Afghan nation will join in the firmest manner, and will stand side by side with the British." At the conclusion of Abdur Rahman's speech, the Viceroy presented the Ameer with a sword of honour. In acknowledging the gift, he said that he hoped to strike with it any enemy of the British. He appeared to be well satisfied with the whole proceedings.

Soon afterwards the conference finally broke up, but no official statement was made concerning the result.

On the 13th the Viceroy left, viâ Attock and Khusalgur, for Lahore, where his Excellency met the Maharajah of Cashmere.

Meanwhile there had been considerable commotion in the debateable land. In November the Afghans sent a troop of horse to Sari-yazi. Alikanoff, of Merv celebrity, with an escort, rode up to the neighbourhood of Penj-deh in order to fix the line of outposts. The Afghan commander chose to consider this a menace of attack, and got ready to fight. Alikanoff waited three hours for the Afghan officer, and then withdrew, sending a letter warning him that if he again advanced beyond his present limits the Russians would advance to Pul-i-khisti. Undeterred by this intimation, the Afghans in January again threw out an armed force towards Sari-yazi. The Russian Government protested at London against this provocative policy, and made good their word by advancing their troops close to the line which they considered to be the Afghan frontier. The English Government, misled by mistaken conception of the facts, demanded the withdrawal of the Russian troops. The moment, however, that it was explained that the Russians were merely occupying debateable land, the first seizure of which had been made by the Afghans, the Government did not press its demand, but contented itself with an arrangement that no further advance should be made on either side.

The end of the dispute of this period was the advance by the Russians upon the Afghans, which is the subject of our first chapter, being the event out of which all the succeeding chapters have arisen.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COUNTRY IN DISPUTE, AND THE CONCLUSION.

PERUSAL of preceding chapters, especially the 4th, 5th and 8th, will leave no room for surprise that the north-west corner of Afghanistan is debateable ground. Ever since it has had any pretensions to history, it has been a prey to the contentions of Persians, Turkomans, and Afghans by turns. Latterly, all the previous complications have been greater; firstly, from the divided rule as between Cabul and Herat, and secondly because the control of Herat by Cabul has been exceedingly slender since the union of the government was nominally restored.

Our fourth chapter makes it plain that this portion of Afghanistan is more accessible from without, hence the ease with which it has been invaded by depredators. Lying the lowest it enjoys a more genial climate than other parts of the country, and, having an exceedingly fertile soil, it has acquired the appellation of the Garden of Central Asia. Most of it is roughly—very roughly—called Badghis, but where that begins or ends nobody knows.

Local pronounciation of names, and the infirmities of our stumbling orthography affording no means of expressing them with any degree of certainty, have led to much confusion as to what any designation of race may mean. So far as we can make out the two races that most predominate in and about Herat are the Afghan Turkomans (a mixture of the two very turbulent races), and the Sariks, described in our fourth chapter. The term Sarik Turkomans has been adopted by some writers, as hereafter shown, but we believe all the evidence proves that to be erroneous. Afghan Turkoman is a better designation for the people alluded to.

The Sariks, then, as we conceive, are a peacefully disposed, industrious, and pastoral people, who have for ages been attracted there by the natural fertility. The Afghan Turkomans, partaking of the characteristics of their cousins on both sides, are the very reverse, and have, almost without cessation, made the Sariks the victims of their raids, robberies, and murders, until the climax of

disorder for twenty-five years past has driven the Sariks to despair, and the land out of such cultivation as it formerly had.

There is another element to be considered. The Khivans, Bokharans and Merves have, from time immemorial, been slave hunters and dealers. The slaves have been obtained by raids, partly from north and north-east Persia, and partly from the Sariks. Russia, having abolished serfdom, has, like some other nations in similar circumstances, made a merit ever since of putting down slavery everywhere else. Without regard to what their motives have been, the Russian forces have therefore abolished, or nearly so, the former slave markets of Khiva, Bokhara, and Merv. In brief, Sir Henry Rawlinson is jealous because they have the merit of doing so, and thinks we should have prevented them by force.

It will not surprise anyone to be told that the Turkomans of Merv and the Afghan Turkomans are decidedly mixed up, so that it is as difficult to determine the allegiance of any individual as it is to decide upon the boundary between the two countries. This, however, is certain, that the facilities for raids and robberies which formerly existed have been very much curtailed since the occupation of Merv. The Sariks have been able to resume their pastoral labours, and the Afghan Turkomans, finding their former occupation gone, are also disposed to some extent to get an honest living. The definitive establishment of Afghan rule would destroy all this. The well-disposed people, having felt the advantage of the change, wish to hold by it, the only way of preventing the resumption of disorder being to shut the Afghan government out. Lest this should be considered a prejudiced view of the situation, we quote from authorities that cannot possibly be regarded as prejudiced in favour of the Russian view of the case.

The *Times* correspondent, writing from Bala Murghab, says:—
“But why is it that the rich soil of Badghis lies waste, for, except on the banks of the Kushk and Murghab there is no cultivation, and until quite lately not even nomads to graze their flocks on its rich herbage? We know that Badghis was once a well-populated, prosperous country. There are remains of canals, aqueducts, forts, villages, and even cities. Yet now large herds of antelope, wild asses, and particularly fierce wild boars, which have given us some exciting spear hunts, monopolise its fair surface. Wolves and tigers are also said to be found. The chief sport of the Turkomans is the wild ass, and when we cross the Chashma Sabz Pass a party

of Turkomans were roaming over the plains below in search of it. According to local tradition Badghis was once peopled with Jagatai Tartars, whose gravestones are still to be found in considerable numbers. In the reign of Abbass the Great the country was at its zenith of prosperity, and when Abbass II. invaded the Herat valley the powerful Jagatai ruler of Badghis, Shah Khalil, was selected to oppose his progress to Kuhsan. This he did very successfully, but his victory was cruelly revenged; for Shah Abbass having at last succeeded against Herat, made his way through the Bund-i-Baba Pass into Badghis, and put to the sword, not only Shah Khalil, but the entire population of the district. It is said that Badghis remained desolate until Nadir Shah induced the Char Aimak tribes, the Jamshidis in particular, to populate it, but in 1838 it was again devastated by the scourge of war. In that year the Persian army invaded Herat, and commenced the celebrated siege which the genius and heroism of Pottinger so signally defeated. The Herat valley and Badghis suffered cruelly; the latter less at the hands of the Persians than from the Khivan army which marched across from Merv to the help of Kamran Shah. A year or two after, Abbott, Shakespeare, and Conolly travelled through Badghis, and found it absolutely deserted, excepting the banks of the Kushk and Penj-deh at its northern extremity. Since then it has remained desolate, and no wonder, for it became the highway of the Turkoman robbers of Merv when out on their man-stealing expeditions, and their hunting-ground when they had leisure to hunt animals instead of men. A cultivator would soon have found himself thrown on a Turkoman horse—his feet fastened together under its belly, his head anywhere—on his way to the slave market of Khiva. My guide, a Jamshidi, indeed, had suffered this fate, and had been sold for about £20 in the slave market of Khiva. He was employed as a household servant until his old father, having at last scraped up a ransom, obtained a safe conduct from the Turkomans—for it would be bad policy to stand in the way of a ransom—and trudged the 700 miles from Kuhsan to Khiva to buy back his only son. It is extraordinary that patriotism is not overwhelmed and swept away by the gratitude which these people should feel to Russia for emancipating them from the hateful Turkoman. But it is not so."

That, however, as remarked by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, is a matter of opinion on which so good an authority as the *Standard's* corre-

spondent at the same place dissents entirely from his confrère. He says:—"The cheerful aspect of Nature—the grassy rolling downs and the rich black soil of the plains, and the not unnumerous mountain streams and the traces of former populations—only reminded us more forcibly of the ruthless persecution by man of man in their fertile valleys, and of the appalling desolation which human wickedness had created. After crossing the Helmund, the terror created by the Turkoman—the 'Khoufi Turkoman'—was first realised. Even on the banks of the Helmund that terror had been felt, for daring raiders from Merv had swept down even to them. In Seistan they told us that it is since the Russ came that men dared to travel unarmed, and that before that time life was a struggle for the preservation of their lives and of their cattle; men, they said, worked ever fearing and watching for enemies; and they told us that when a cloud appeared on the horizon, they fled to the fortified villages for their lives. Approaching the Turkoman country, the injury caused by the Turkoman is appalling—is astounding to those who have not seen the country and witnessed the desolation that has been worked. It will take long to efface the remembrance throughout Central Asia of this kindness and liberality of the Russians to the prisoners they rescued from the Turkomans. It is idle to overlook the fact that the Russians have acquired an immense influence by the liberation of these prisoners. Between Kuhsan and Kushk the country has been depopulated; harried as if they were wild beasts, the people fled; they fled a country in which they could not live. How sure the peace is that has followed the Russian conquest of Merv we saw in approaching the Bala Murghab. We passed thousands of sheep and herds of cattle driven by unarmed peasants down to Kushk, and unarmed merchants travelling with their goods. The people themselves said to us, 'This is now possible because the Turkoman strength has been broken.' A couple of years ago, they told us, with impressive seriousness, not a flock of sheep dare be driven, or a caravan pass, over the country we had passed through; and to show how terrible was the fear they had felt, they used to remind us, as if it were to convince us of the reality of that fear, that not even that mission itself, five years ago, could have escaped the Turkoman. Passing through the country raided over and ruined, and hearing the tales of people—sufferers whose relatives have been killed or taken away and made slaves, and whose labour and herds have been plundered—it is im-

possible to think of the Turkomans otherwise than as ferocious, merciless fiends."

A correspondent of the *Illustrated News* says:—"We stopped a day at Ak Tapa, and then moved on to Penj-deh. About six miles to the south nearly the whole distance is covered with Sarik villages, formed of kibitkas. The Murghab, as well as the Kushk valley, was without inhabitants, and its fields were lying waste. Some years ago the Sariks arrived, and they have restored the place to life again. Some of their chiefs came along the Kushk valley, and met Sir Peter Lumsden on the third march from Ak Tapa; crowds of the Sariks turned out to see our arrival, and the outskirts of the camp were generally fringed with them. At Penj-deh we remained two days. One of these days was principally occupied by a visit from the Governor of Herat, who had followed us up; and Sir Peter Lumsden paid a visit to Yalintoosh Khan, the chief of the Jamsheedies. There are the ruins, little more than mounds, of an old fort, and the evident remains of a town around it; these also are nothing more than mounds, on the west side of the river. A man called it 'Kona Pendie,' by which he meant Old Penj-deh. If there is a new Penj-deh, we did not see it, unless it be the kibitka villages of the Sariks, and they extend for over twenty miles along both banks of the Murghab. We were scarcely prepared for such a large-sized river as we found here. It is as wide as Regent Street, of considerable depth, with a large volume of bluish-grey water flowing steadily past. Fords are very few, and the one we crossed at Maruchak had at least four feet of water in its deepest part. I heard someone estimate the breadth of the valley at Penj-deh as about four or five miles; whether this is exact or not, there is a large width of ground which has been cultivated when the valley was prosperous and full of inhabitants. The mounds were the remains of large towns, and they are a sure evidence of the population that once existed and found subsistence on the banks fertilised by the waters of the Murghab."

These things are confirmed and supplemented by the *Daily News*:—"The valley of the Murghab is wide. The hills on each side are not high; in many places they look like heaps of sand which have been accumulated by the wind. These hills cannot be cultivated, but flocks find grazing on all the higher ground. It is only where the water of the Murghab can be led by canals that crops can be raised. For this purpose there are the fifty miles of the

valley from Bala Murghab to Penj-deh. Maruchak is on the east bank of the river. Except the ruins of some mud walls, there is no town. The Afghans have built barracks within this circle, and are restoring some ruined walls on the top of the mound. Their object is to keep a garrison here, probably in connection with the new frontier, and also on account of the return of a population to the valley.

“ There is a fort at Bala Murghab, garrisoned with Afghan troops ; there are also four guns here and the artillerymen. The fort is on a mound, where the river forms a great loop, and its position commands the neck, thus making the peninsula formed by the loop a secure piece of ground, for the river is too deep for any attack to be made across it. The Sarik Turkomans some years ago came from the direction of Merv, and settled about Penj-deh ; they are bringing the ground again into cultivation, not only in the Murghab valley, but also along the Kushk. On our march south we passed their kibitka villages all the way to Maruchak, their farthest south encampment being near to that place—as already stated, that is about twenty-two miles from Penj-deh. The Jamshidis are moving from about Kushk, and that is the upper part of the Kushk river, where there is a town of the same name. About two years ago a number of families arrived and occupied the ground north of Bala Murghab. An additional emigration came about a year ago, and went farther north ; and we came upon their villages, about nine or ten miles down the river. This leaves about twelve miles still without any population ; in addition to this there are side valleys to fill up, and even where the people have taken up their abode they are not in sufficient numbers yet to cultivate all the ample breadth of the Murghab valley.”

Again :—“ The Turkoman raiding is now at an end, so completely that it is never likely to be resumed. In the future a population will again appear, and the ruined towns will be rebuilt. Russia is entitled to the honour of having accomplished all this by her conquest of Central Asia. . . . From Ak Tapa to Bala Murghab we have now marched along fifty miles of the Murghab Valley. It is an easy matter to give every detail of its present condition, but the difficulty is to realise what this beautiful vale was in its days of prosperity when it was inhabited and all under cultivation. Now it would be like judging of a beautiful landscape after a tornado has swept over it. Devastation has here accomplished a complete

ruin. What it was we can only imagine from what we know of places in the same region which are similarly situated. In the fifty miles we have passed over we have seen the remains of many towns or cities, for it is difficult now to say exactly what was their size, or what may have been their importance and rank when they existed. Nothing now remains but mounds and ridges. The fields are wastes and covered with long grass and reeds. There is scarcely such a thing as a tree in the valley; fruit is unknown, and the vine is nowhere to be seen. The eruptions of human lava from the great crater of Central Asia have continued so long that the existence of men and women became impossible. There is an oft-quoted reference about the horse of the Turk—where it goes grass ceases to grow—but for the last few weeks we have been on the ground trodden by the Turkoman's horse, and it tells a sadder tale, for on that soil human beings have ceased to live. The man-stealing and devastating system extended all round the Central Asian desert—from Badakshan and the sources of the Oxus; on the northern part of Afghanistan; on the Persian frontier to the Caspian; on that sea there were pirate vessels manned by Turkomans, who captured Russian and Persian craft, seizing whoever was on board, and selling them into slavery. On the north the same system went on, and Russian subjects were carried off and sold in the markets of Khiva and Bokhara, these being the two principal marts for slaves. Many were also kept by the Turkomans in the desert, where they had to work in the fields, and were poorly clad as well as having but little to eat. The impossibility or great difficulty of escaping through the desert gave the surety of possession to the owner of a slave. Without this the system could not have gone on. After the Persian defeat by the Turkomans at Merv in 1860, prisoners were a drug in the bazaar, and a Persian could be bought for two kran, or about eighteen-pence. This was the result of an effort on the part of the Persian Government to punish the Turkomans for their raids.

“The raiders swooped down upon Persia and Afghanistan, burning, slaughtering, and enslaving. No one could control them till the Russians came. When the power of the Tekkes was broken, then peace, unknown before, began to bless the war-harried land. It is hardly two years since Russian conquest removed this blighting curse, and already peasants are settling in the deserted valleys. The Sariks themselves at Penj-deh and

elsewhere are betaking themselves to peaceful pursuits, and the Jemshidis and other Afghan tribes are colonising the fertile land. It is this region, freed by the Russian sword from the presence of a scourge of which we in this country can form no conception, a land empty and desolate, and now for the first time rendered habitable, that we are claiming for Afghanistan."

No one is qualified to express a reliable opinion on the situation who is not informed upon the leading points dealt with in the foregoing pages. The more all the facts are considered the more must be apparent the extreme difficulty of arriving at a conclusion that will meet the justice of the case all round.

The official difficulty is in a great degree owing to the entangling engagements with the Ameer, which bind us to the maintenance of territory that is not clearly defined. Consideration of the history disclosed by our fourth and fifth chapters must convince every candid reader that the district of Herat is at once Persian, Afghan, Turkestan, and *independent of all*. The claim of the Ameer to the city itself is of the flimsiest character, much more so the district in which it is situated. It is a title which, as a matter of business, a keen conveyancer would not consider sufficient on any terms.

We were in a fair way of arriving at a definite settlement of the boundary when the correspondence was going on between Prince Gortschakoff and Earl Granville in 1872-3, but the Tory ministers of 1874-80 succeeded in destroying the landmarks then laid down, and in reducing the whole subject into its former confusion. The Liberal Government, being compelled to succeed to that confusion, find the previous landmarks unreliable. To revert to them is now delusive, for new circumstances have arisen, and new evidence is upon record, complicated by the entanglements with the Ameer.

Statesmen of the highest ability may well be baffled before a full view of the whole field of evidence. They have to deal with a power that will not fail at every turn to take unscrupulous advantage of every weak point in our contentions. That is why it is of more importance than on ordinary occasions to avoid weak points, if we can, though we must accept and make the best of the weak points upon which we have no option but to rely.

The chiefest of the weak points is the character of our alliance

with Afghanistan. The purveyors, as they conceive, of mere news sufficient for the day, unconsciously bear testimony. See, as recorded in our eleventh chapter, the manner of man we have to stand up for, whose only confidant is a man-cook. See, in the absence of all reference to ladies, the reminder of descent from a race, so outside the influences and amenities of civilisation, that their mothers, their wives, their sisters, their daughters, are never so much as mentioned—not once in all their sanguinary history; or, if mentioned, so obscurely as to escape ordinary observation. See the characteristics of the best body-guard he could muster on a state occasion; a soiled and ragged rabble of barbarians, scarcely able to restrain their disposition to have a fling at something or somebody even then. We need go no further to be assured that the promises of the Amcer are of no more value than fleeting clouds as between us and the unruly people he nominally—and only nominally—rules, with reference to whom he confesses he is powerless to guarantee us against disorder and, not unlikely, assassination.

As for the greater power of Russia, it might be comparatively easy to deal with the individual Czar, were he the actual ruler. It is commonly supposed that he is an unqualified despot. Whatever his predecessors may have been in the earlier history of Russia, the later history, glanced at towards the end of our third chapter, conclusively proves that, after the time of Ivan the Terrible, the despotism was not concentrated upon the individual at the nominal head of the government, but was exercised by the nobles in secret, the Czar being their mere tool, with all the responsibility but not the actual power of sovereignty. It is not with that visible sovereignty, but with the secret and unknown power behind him, that we have to cope.

All this should put us upon our guard to avoid with the utmost vigilance the chance of falling into errors either of fact or judgment. The House of Commons, on the 27th of April, rightly voted without opposition eleven millions sterling to cover the contingencies of the situation, and Mr. Gladstone rightly said, with reference to the unanimity of the House: "I believe, with one heart and one soul and one purpose only, while preserving absolute liberty to judge the conduct of the Government, and to visit them with its consequences, they will go forward to meet the demands of justice in the cause of honour, and will only, subject to justice and to honour, labour for the public peace."

Should that peace prove to be impossible, we have to take scrupulous care that we are in the right in going to war. Being in the right, we shall not flinch from abiding by it, be the consequences what they may. To sustain the right, Englishmen, Scotchmen, and the flower of the people of Ireland, in every quarter and corner of the world, are ready to join hand in hand and voice with voice in saying, what was before said on a momentous occasion, that we pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour.

THE END.