

THE
CENTRAL-ASIAN
QUESTION

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FROM

AN EASTERN STAND-POINT.

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4, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON:
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1869.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS paper was printed for private circulation in September last. The word "Private" was printed upon the cover. Some persons to whom it was sent, or others to whom they lent it, seem to have attached more importance to the author's remarks than he did himself, and the result was that the brochure was reviewed by some journals, and otherwise noticed by writers in the public press as the "Blue Pamphlet." Privacy, therefore, being no longer possible, the paper is published at the request of a few who take sufficient interest in Eastern affairs to look below that smooth surface which covers the deep waters of Asiatic politics. With the exception of a few verbal corrections, the paper up to page 73 remains unaltered. Subsequently the review has been brought up to date. The object of this paper is not to criticise in a hostile spirit the acts of a Government of which the writer disapproves—a Government which, under the Governor-Generalship of Earl Canning reached the zenith of dignity—but mainly to endeavour, by holding up a mirror to the Asiatic mind, to reflect the images those acts have produced therein. If any bitterness should be apparent in the manner in which this duty has been performed, it is that bitterness which is inseparable from the feeling that National honour, National character, all that is worth struggling for in the East, has been abandoned and lost.

THE 'Eastern Question' has long been a bug-bear in Europe. Many people use the term without understanding its full meaning. Others have been so accustomed to hear it talked of, that, to their minds, it suggests an idea something akin to the cry of "wolf." Yet statesmen, and all men who do understand the serious nature of this question, and the complicated and very alarming difficulties its mismanagement may give rise to, have little doubt regarding its intimate bearing upon the peace, not of Europe alone, but of the World. Let us lift the veil of darkness behind which this skeleton is concealed and examine it a little.

It is in obedience to a natural law that, as amongst animals the stronger devour the weaker, so amongst men, they conquer and subdue each other. Hence, first arose the idea of *Universal Dominion*, which from time immemorial, has swayed the minds and guided the actions of monarchs, and which, if it were permitted to obtain development, would be as strong to-day as it was in the times of Xerxes and Alexander, and in the days of Napoleon Bonaparte. Much is talked, occasionally, of the *Antagonism of Race*: but I do not attach so much importance to this idea as some do. No doubt races differ in

their characteristics, and these differences ought not at all times to be left so far out of sight as they have been by the Saxon when settling his account with the Celt. But in the case under review it is nationalities rather than races we have to deal with, and types of civilization—the European and the Asiatic. The former is represented by one nation of Europe alone, Russia; the latter by the whole of the nations, and tribes of Asia. Russia is the most eastern of the fraternity of nations comprised in the continent of Europe. The civilization of the East and West, or as some would probably put it, the *barbarism* of the East and the *civilization* of the West, meet on her confines. It is not necessary to step aside here to enter into arguments as to whether Eastern civilization and barbarism are synonymous terms. Let it be granted that the civilization of the West is of a more advanced if not of a higher *order* than that of the East; and that its spread can only be viewed as an onward move in the inevitable destiny of the world. That Russia, therefore, should conquer and subdue the Turk, that she should put the sick man out of pain and to death; that she should spread her influence over the vast countries which form the greater part of the continent of Asia, and restore order and good government, if ever they have known them, to the various peoples inhabiting them, *from this point of view*, could not but be a source of unmixed gratification to all the civilized nations of Europe and America.

This position is not likely to be disputed; but were it disputed by all the other nations of Europe, it must be admitted by England, for on this ground she has repeatedly justified her conquest and occupation of India. Some of her most distinguished statesmen even have gone so far as to assert that the acquisition of fresh territory is a position, which it is a moral obligation upon the nation to accept. Looking at the question, therefore, purely as one affecting the interests of civilization, no European nation has a *right* to object to extensions of either the frontiers or the influence of Russia, even though pushed to the extreme limit of the absorption of States and Kingdoms, provided that the nations whose countries are so absorbed, are rude and barbarous, or to use a common though ambiguous phrase, effete and antagonistic to progress. Least of all can England with any show of reason offer any justifiable opposition to the designs of Russia as regards her Oriental neighbours, for were she to do so, a defence of her own Eastern policy would become a matter of some difficulty.

So far then, all that remains for Europe and England to do, is to look on patiently while Russia quietly and steadily pursues that policy of national expansion which has been the guiding principle of her government since the days of Peter the Great.

But at this stage of the discussion another element enters the argument, viz. the "Balance of power." Here all Europe with England is interested, and

on the principle that self-preservation is the first law of nations as of nature, all Europe with England has a right to be interested in restraining Russia or any other of the great fraternity of European nationalities from acquiring an accession of territory or a position which shall place it, as it were, beyond the control of any combination of the other great Powers, and thus enable it to menace any or all of them, or otherwise jeopardise the peace of the world. The existence of the term "balance of power" is in itself an acknowledgment of the truth of the argument as far as it has been pushed; and it is solely the influence of this idea which has maintained, and which still operates to maintain, the integrity of the Turkish empire.

As regards Europe, therefore, England has no special cause to fear the designs of Russia upon Constantinople or the Turkish Empire; or, however much more serious the consequences to her, as a great maritime and commercial power, might be, not more, at least, than any other of the nations of Europe; and whilst she is in possession of Gibraltar, which many people seem so anxious to get rid of, not so much as a great many, such for example as those lying along the shores of the Mediterranean. The development of a Russian navy in the Mediterranean it is true might have a special bearing on the question of the preservation of our through route to India and the East; but it is not necessary for me in this paper to discuss this point, or others opened

up by the completion of the Suez Canal, nor further to allude to the Eastern Question in regard to its purely European aspect.

I am fully aware of the apathy with which all questions connected with the British Empire in the East are treated in England. As a rule, they are looked upon as an *ineffable bore*. It requires a massacre, a war, or at least a great scandal, to attract even a small modicum of public attention to any Indian question, though it may involve the welfare and happiness of two hundred millions of Her Majesty's subjects. I am not ignorant, therefore, that in travelling out of Europe, I cut from under my feet my *locus standi* with the British public. I write, however, not for the general public; and I desire to state, that unless the reader, whoever he be, will give very thoughtful and attentive consideration to the whole *argument*, he had much better not proceed with the perusal of these brief remarks.

On passing over into Asia, the aspect of affairs at once undergoes a material change. Being *forced*, as before demonstrated, to admit, that the wave of civilization ought not to be arrested in its Eastward course; it remains to be considered how stands the question on the other ground of argument, the "balance of power."

In the East there is no fraternity of highly civilized nations with whom England can co-operate in imposing constitutional checks upon the advance of Russia into the heart of Asia, or who will join in

saying to the Ruler of her destinies, "Thus far shalt thou proceed and no further." England, therefore, in Asia stands in a very different position to that which she occupies in Europe. Unaided, except by such support as she can derive from the nations of the East, she must meet Russia *alone*. Where there are but two great nations contending for dominion, properly speaking, there can be no "balance of power." The absolute equality under such circumstances of two powers is an impossibility: one *must* be the stronger, and the day of trial which shall decide which of the two it is, though it may be postponed, *must* come at last. And this at once brings us face to face with the vital element in the question.

It is unnecessary here to dwell upon the fact, that assuming non-conscription to be the rule, England can *never* be a great military power. Great Britain will not furnish a regular army of over 200,000 British bayonets. Indeed I doubt if ever she can count upon being able to muster much more than one-fourth of that number of efficient soldiers upon any foreign field of battle. In the Crimea, our army never reached fifty thousand British soldiers; in India our armies on no field of battle have ever mustered so many as half that strength of British soldiers. At the outbreak of the Mutiny the entire strength of the army for the protection of India—a continent as large as the whole of Europe without Russia—was considerably *under* fifty thousand British troops. *Voilà tout!*

I have said that in Asia, England can look for support solely to Eastern Nationalities, or such a combination of them as her *influence* in the East enables her to command. It is a maxim, however, in the East, a maxim the truth of which is proved by the history of seven centuries at least, that, in conflicts for Empire, the great body of the people invariably side with the strongest, without having much regard for the cause of the dispute or the character or policy of the disputants. In short, the sense of self-interest is well developed, and there being little self-reliance, nationalities are weak. Patriotism, if it exists at all, it is obvious, must ever be against the foreigner in possession rather than the invader. People both in England and in India have talked and still talk a great deal, and talk a great deal of nonsense too, about the *loyalty* of Her Majesty's Indian subjects. I do not understand what they mean; or more probably those persons who use the term do so without having any regard for its true meaning. I have seen countless petitions addressed to the Government of India by natives claiming *rewards* for having saved the lives of Englishmen, and for not having made common cause with the mutineers; and the proceedings of the Government of India in such cases would seem to recognize this position. The word *rebel* was as freely used in correspondence in the Indian Mutinies, as the gallows was actively employed in their suppression; but on no occasion do I recollect the Govern-

ment of India attempting broadly to maintain the high ground, the converse of this view of the position requires, *viz.*, that *not* to aid actively in maintaining order and protecting the lives and properties of Englishmen, or even of Government servants, in times of rebellion and mutiny, is treasonable. *In short, we are aliens, and the great body of our troops are mercenaries; our position in India and our influence not only as regards the native Chiefs and Princes, but as regards our own subjects, is good and will remain good so long as we are, or are supposed to be the strongest power in the field, and no longer.* In peace we are perpetually acting as if we had forgotten or disbelieved in this fact, while the truth of it is as frequently forced upon us in war and troublous times.

If all this is admitted, it follows that to maintain our influence with our own subjects, the native chiefs and princes, and the chiefs and princes of the surrounding frontier states, however unwilling the British Government may be to plunge into war, or however unpleasant it may be for the Parliament and people of England to entertain the idea of contributing more men and more money for the Queen's service in India, it is desirable not to exhibit any signs of weakness. This is very well known to most persons who having resided long in India have been able to fathom the Asiatic mind, and has furnished the idea upon which are based the arguments for the necessity of maintaining the "prestige" of Great Britain in the East, an idea which, not

being very well understood in England, has often been ridiculed in the public prints. I am in a position, however, to state positively that the vicissitudes of the Crimean campaign were watched by the natives of India, and especially by the intelligent and educated classes, with the deepest interest, and as the subject is of some importance I shall give an illustration. In one instance, long after the war was over, I was asked by a very highly educated native to procure for him General de Todleben's account of that campaign. Thinking it strange that he should evince so much interest in a European war some years after it was over, I inquired the cause, and was informed by my Indian friend that, having read both the English and French accounts he was now anxious to read the Russian account. And with what object? *viz.* "that," as he stated, "by a comparison of all three he might form his own opinion as to which of these three great powers individually was the strongest." His argument was that the natives of India were well aware that no Indian or no Asiatic power was strong enough to obtain the supremacy in India, and thus preserve peace and good order, and that consequently the intelligent amongst them were quite satisfied, as long as they were well treated, to remain under the government of a foreign power; but, he maintained that they would not feel satisfied with their present position, or have any confidence in the stability of British rule and the power of Government to protect them, if they be-

lieved that any other European power was stronger than England. And when we recollect that the security of all property in land, and in the public funds, rests on whatever guarantees there may be for the permanency of British rule in India, and that all existing native princes feel secured in their possessions on similar terms, it is certainly not surprising that the possessors of this property should take a very warm interest in this question, which I believe to be perpetually under discussion in private society in India.

Many hold that this fact gives us an unassailable position, as regards what they term the loyalty of both our own subjects and the native princes in India ; and there can be no question that up to a certain point it is a bulwark of considerable strength. We are in possession, and undoubtedly it is the interest of all parties concerned to maintain the integrity of the power under which they hold, if on it depends the validity of their titles to their possessions and property. But up to what point is this argument good ? It is good up to that point at which the native princes and our subjects are satisfied that England is a first class power, and able to cope successfully with any other power likely to dispute her supremacy in that part of Asia known as " British India ;" and that their position is as good, or better under British rule than it would be under the rule of any other foreign power. While therefore it is undoubtedly a matter of moment that every

effort should be made to render Her Majesty's Indian subjects not only satisfied with their lot, but satisfied also of the stability of her rule and the integrity of the engagements of her Government, I do not attach any practical value to the security our position as landlord gives us beyond the point here indicated. It can hardly be supposed that any invading power would be so intensely stupid as to array the entire population of a country in possession of an enemy by neglecting to assure the people beforehand, that existing rights in property would be preserved. Most probably, indeed it may be taken as certain that, under the circumstances, an invading power would hold out inducements of more liberal treatment, and make promises they might afterwards find to be more readily made than kept. Let there be *one* defeat on Indian soil by a really powerful European enemy, and the loyalty of Her Majesty's Indian subjects will be very sorely puzzled.

The National Debt of India of course stands on different ground : but what are £100,000,000 amongst so many ? Of this sum again, not a third is held by the natives of India, whilst of the £100,000,000 invested, or in course of investment, in railroads, works of irrigation, and other works of public improvement, not *one million* STERLING represents native capital !! These are remarkable facts, though possibly it would be unfair to attach too much significance to them. Nevertheless, taken in connection with the reputed *hoards* of gold, silver, and pre-

cious stones which are locked up in India, they afford ground for the curious to speculate upon. It is clear, however, that we have no tangible guarantee for the "loyalty" of the natives of India in either the funded debt or other British investment ; and it may with equal certainty be asserted that the sense of security in the permanency of our rule is not yet sufficiently strong in the minds of the natives, whether Kings, Princes, or subjects, to induce them to invest any very large amount of their hoards in securities, the safety of which depends solely upon that basis. The natives of India from time immemorial have been so accustomed to changes of rulers, that they take to new dynasties as readily as Don Juan took to a new mistress ; and many generations I fear must pass away before the ideas founded on the past will be entirely obliterated.

To come to the point, however, *can* the Russians invade India? It is a question which has been asked, and answered both affirmatively and negatively, repeatedly within the last quarter of a century. My opinion is, that if there could be any doubt upon the point, it was settled before the birth of Christ. What the Alexander of two thousand years ago did, with hosts possibly not less numerous than the armies of modern days, surely the Alexander of to-day can do also. It may be objected that in the days of Alexander the Great, armies were not hampered with artillery, ambulance and transport services, and the other impediments of modern warfare. And it

is true. But in a march through a country like Central Asia and Afghanistan, though artillery may impede, it is the Commissariat, or rather the want of it which *kills*. After what Lord Napier's force effected in Abyssinia, with the Indian ocean between his forces and their main source of supply, it is simple folly to talk of the impracticability of a march across Central Asia, and the *impossibility* of a Russian invasion of India.

If the ancients had not the impedimenta, and this argument has any force, let it not be forgotten, that they had not the advantages of modern science to aid them in their campaigns, and that in invading foreign countries, their enemies met them on more even terms than any Asiatic force could now meet a European army.

Much stress, however, has been laid by those who admit the practicability of marching an army through Central Asia to the borders of India, on the enormous disadvantages under which Russia must carry on a campaign in India or on its confines from so distant a base of operation as she would be compelled to adopt. No doubt, with the shores of the Caspian as the nearest Russian basis, the position of an invading army in the event of defeat, in the face of such an army as Great Britain could bring into the field, and surrounded by such warlike, predatory, and treacherous, races as the tribes of Central Asia, would be a very perilous one indeed. Admitting the possibility then of the invasion, the question resolves itself into this :

Would Russia, *under these circumstances*, risk the consequences of failure? And here I think every thing points to the conclusion that she would *not*. The question of "prestige" affects Russia, on the Continent of Asia, equally with Great Britain. The position of Russia in the northern half of the Continent, is very similar to that of England in the southern. Her influence, in so much that she rules with a more despotic sway, is probably greater. It would be as fatal to Russian influence in Asia, and as suicidal a policy in a Russian Minister to risk the signal or final failure of any great military expedition in the East as to England; and if difficulties should ever arise, this should cause *both* governments to pause before proceeding to extremes. It would be quite impossible for any one who has not resided long in India, and almost equally so for those, who though having lived in India have not had opportunities of making themselves acquainted with the secret thoughts and opinions of the natives, to gauge the extent of the loss of England's moral influence in the East generally, which followed the disasters of the Afghan campaign. It was what occurred then which first set the natives of India *thinking*; and it was this *thinking*, combined, of course, with much ignorance and folly in the internal administration of the country by infatuated Governments, which led up to that state of public feeling which culminated in the rebellion of 1857-58. Upon this point I have no doubts.

But it is altogether too late now to discuss considerations which might have had weight some twenty or even ten years ago. We must accept the *situation* as it is, and look at things not as they were, but as they are; and consider possible, not probable, eventualities. Russian policy may be slow; but it is very sure. Russian statesmen saw and appreciated the difficulties of a campaign on the confines of India, with their base of operations on the Caspian, and whole armies of warlike and valiant tribes in hostile possession of the Kirgiz Steppes and the intervening and surrounding countries, very much better than English Russo-phobists. An idea so wild doubtless never entered the head of any Russian statesman. But with the Caucasians expatriated, a railway from the Caspian to the sea of Aral,* the Oxus and Jaxartes Russo-Asiatic rivers and covered with steam flotillas, and Russian influence almost supreme in Persia, the situation becomes serious if not alarming. Few who are competent to discuss this very important question, will dispute what is here advanced, or deny that the case is one for very thoughtful consideration. Russia has advanced her frontiers so far towards the south-east since the Afghan war of 1839-42, that her outposts are now very much nearer to Delhi than they are to Moscow; she has obtained so great an influence in Persia that she can almost demand

* Since the above was written, it has been stated that this Railway has actually been projected.

what she pleases from the Court of the Shah-in-Shah: and she has set her foot on ground whences he can, if she be so inclined, exercise an influence not only amongst the nations of Central Asia, but within India itself, that may involve us in very great trouble, if it be not productive of the gravest consequences. This latter is in my humble judgment the point for most serious consideration. To prove the truth of it, reference need simply be made to the columns of the native newspapers in India. For the last two years, they have teemed with warnings and alarm notes, which are but the reflex of the rumours which have been floating in Indian bazaars, and which are so greedily devoured by the people. Russia, if the reports received from the scene of operations be correct, has not been content with completing her military occupation of the country she has conquered. She has openly taken the Church of Islam under her protection, and that Church through the *Shaikh ul-Islam* and the *Mullâhs* has accepted her protectorate; she has established schools for the education of the children and youth of the country, and courts for the administration of justice amongst the people, &c. She is laying the foundations of an Empire; and this work completed, Afghanistan *alone* will intervene between her and the object of her ambition, if that be the conquest of India.

The question to ask *first* is—will Russia's next move be the invasion of India? Certainly not.

Notwithstanding the reputed difficulties of the road, the practicability of the invasion of India from Russia's present position would simply be a question of the neutrality of Persia, and Russian influence with the ruling power, or the strongest party, in Afghanistan. And in this view, the existence of a civil war in Afghanistan would much simplify matters, for Russian support to either of the contending factions would very soon turn the scale and secure the active co-operation of the Afghan Government for the designs of the invader. But, as mentioned above, Russia is far too cautious and crafty to attempt any such enterprize. It would be simple madness in her to do so, except the condition of circumstances compelled her, against her will, to assume the offensive, which, though it is quite a possible contingency, there seems no *immediate* probability of. The point for consideration is rather whether it is or is not the intention of Russia to stop short in her career of conquest, at the point which she has now reached. If it is, she will probably not object to co-operate with us in our endeavours to compass the formation of a strong government in Afghanistan, with the view of securing peace on her own frontiers. But, unfortunately, the policy of Russia, as far as the past enables us to form any opinion regarding it, leaves some room to doubt whether she will arrest her progress, even if her troublesome neighbours will allow her to do so. The history of British India shows how easy it is for a European

power when brought into conflict with Asiatics, to find pretexts for the annexation of territory, and also how she may be forced into collision with her neighbours, and how the acquisition of fresh territory may become a necessity in order to secure guarantees for future peace. The policy of Russia has ever been, and would still seem to be aggressive. It was the custom to accuse England of this offence; and her proceedings, especially in the East, gave colour to the charge. But her ambition for conquest has been sated. Her aspirations for some years, and, especially since 1857, have been for contraction rather than for expansion. She has been taught, and by sad experience, that an Empire may be weakened by its own weight. Not so Russia; this is a lesson she has yet to learn, for she seems to be unappalled by the extension of her frontiers to any conceivable limit.

We may assume, therefore, that the civil war which has been raging in Afghanistan for the past two or three years, as tending to weaken the Government of that State, has been very favourable to the designs of Russia; and that the Government of India, by taking no part, diplomatic or otherwise, in the politics of Central Asia, has both in fact and in effect been playing out her game, assuming it to be really that which I have supposed. From this point of view, all Russia need do is to occupy her time in consolidating the empire, the foundations of which she has already laid in Central Asia,

while she watches for her opportunity in internal commotion in Afghanistan to step in and take possession of the country without weakening her own strength by the loss of a Russian soldier. Is England prepared for this?

Reasoning from the analogies with which history furnishes us, this appears to be the line of policy which Russian statesmen are likely to adopt. Indeed, I may say, it is the policy which *any* wise statesman would advise, because it may be said to be that course which common sense recommends. *Russia has no intention whatever of immediately invading India.* Of this there can be no question; but the fact cannot be too often repeated, as the converse of this proposition has furnished the advocates of a do-nothing policy with the only arguments of any weight they can bring against those who would prefer to see England as alive to the true circumstances of her own position in the East as Russia is to hers. In the *first* place, Russia is not at present equal to the invasion of India, and she is much too wise to attempt any project which offers an almost certain prospect of defeat. In the *second* place, she is at peace with England; England is just now in close alliance with France; and there appears no reasonable ground whatever to assume that Russia is at all anxious to disturb her existing relations with either of these great powers. *Thirdly*, America is not in a position to take any part in a general war. And *fourthly*, it is Russia's wisest

policy, as just mentioned, to consolidate her empire in Central Asia; to subjugate Persia completely to her will; and finally to obtain possession of Afghanistan, if she can, before she makes any attempt at more important conquests. We cannot, nevertheless, calculate upon this, for Russia cannot herself say how far or in what direction the current of events in either Europe or Asia may carry her.

Some politicians say, "Let her do all this; we see no harm in it, but on the contrary, great good. Russia would be a better neighbour to us than the treacherous tribes of Afghanistan. Upon her would devolve the difficult task of coercing and reducing to order the rude, barbarous, and lawless hordes which swarm around the north-western frontiers of India, and *we* should be relieved of much anxiety and expense." But this is plainly the argument of those who do not understand our position in the East as a foreign power, and as an alien though dominant race. I have before attempted to explain this, and it will suffice here to state, that however willing the cabinet of St. James may be to acquiesce in the Indus being the boundary line between Asiatic Russia and the British Empire in the East, the natives of India will *never* permit it without declaring for Russian supremacy in a manner we should find very awkward indeed. What we have to *guard* is quite as serious a charge as what we have to prepare ourselves to meet in the field, in

the event of an invading force pouring through the Kyber and Bolan passes.

Indeed the position with Russia on the Indus involves, to my mind, little, if anything, short of the abandonment of India; for, there is another point of such singular importance that it cannot be over-rated, yet which, strange to say, I have not yet seen made a strong argument in any of the discussions which have taken place on the Central-Asian Question. Whatever *European* government ruling at Cabul can command Afghanistan as a recruiting field, it *must* dominate the whole of Central Asia and Upper India. No troops that India proper can send into the field could meet an army composed of *disciplined* Afghans and border tribes. The Sikhs are good soldiers—there are no better soldiers possibly in the whole world, if we have regard to their fighting qualities: but the whole Sikh population of the Punjab does not number over half-a-million, while the population of Afghanistan is nearly eight times that strength. Besides which, taken in the mass, our best soldiers are Mohammedans; the very flower of our native army I may say come from Afghanistan and the neighbouring countries. In case of such a war, they would naturally be a source of great anxiety to us, if our arms should receive the slightest check. This is a consideration of very great weight, for what I said in the outset of this paper must ever be kept steadily in view, viz. that it is to Eastern nationalities alone,

that either England or Russia can look for support in their struggle for supremacy in the East. It has been surmised that America will one day make a move for obtaining a footing in the East, and that she will endeavour to pay her grudge to England in Eastern waters. She may do so; Russia also will find means to separate England and France certainly before she tries her strength with either again; but how *imbroglios* in Western politics may affect the situation in Central Asia does not enter into the argument at this point. Let us direct our attention rather to the consideration of how England stands prepared for such a contingency as an invasion of India from the north-west, if *ever* it should come upon her.

I have no books, and few documents, or papers with me, so I cannot claim for my figures the accuracy of an official return. I have data, however, to feel satisfied myself of their general accuracy, which is sufficient for my purpose; and assuming them to be approximately correct, it must be admitted that our military position, considered with reference to an invasion from beyond our north-west frontiers, is not very satisfactory. Very few people in England, I know, care much whether it is or not; still as an army question, and one purely of military defence, it may be worthy of some little attention.

We have before us a Continent comprising an area of about 1,400,000 square miles; or, to speak

more intelligibly to the English reader, almost as large as the *whole* of Europe without Russia. Its population is variously and vaguely estimated at from 180,000,000 to 200,000,000 of souls. Let us assume it to be the smaller figure of the two. Its natural defences from foreign invasion are good, *viz.*, the sea on the south, south-east, and south-west; and chains of the loftiest mountains in the world on the north, north-east, and north-west.

This vast Continent is at present, taken as a whole, under the sway of Great Britain; but the government of certain portions of it—say one-half of its area, or rather more, is still administered by native Kings, Princes, and Chiefs, who acknowledge her supremacy, and admit their allegiance to the Sovereign of England, but who are otherwise supposed to be independent. These sovereigns taken together maintain for the protection of the internal peace of their dominions not less than from 180,000 to 200,000 soldiers. According to an official return of recent date, the Princes of Rajputanah alone maintain amongst them an army of 100,000 fighting men. Some of these are not very efficient soldiers; but others of them again are. Sindiah, for example, has a division of 10,000 men at Gualior which he would be quite prepared to put through the evolutions of a field day in competition with any division of the Bengal Army. Indeed, at the Grand Review at the Durbar at Agra, in 1866, he was heard to express an opinion very similar to that attributed

to a Russian General during the Crimean War, that the British army was an “Army of Lions led by Asses.”

Well, to retain possession of that portion of the Continent called British India, the Indian Government maintained, according to a statement of Sir Henry Lawrence, before the year 1857, the following detail:—

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---------|
| European troops | . | . | . | . | 48,519 |
| Native ditto | . | . | . | . | 275,304 |
| | | | | | 323,823 |
| Total European and Native Army | . | | | | 323,823 |

This force was intended chiefly for the maintenance of the internal peace of India. At that time Russia's right arm had just been paralysed by her defeat in the Crimea; her power had been humbled in the dust. She had not moreover completed the expatriation of the Caucasians, nor attained a position in the East whence she could give cause for alarm to the Government of India, whose sole anxiety, therefore, was to keep the peace at home, and to protect her frontiers from the raids of lawless tribes. The Government of India of that day, nevertheless, Lord Canning being Viceroy, was so alive to the imperative necessity of maintaining the integrity of England's position with *all* the Asiatic Courts in the proximity of India, that the advance of a Persian army on Herat, led to a declaration of war, and the despatch of a military expedition to the Persian Gulf. The rest is part of history.

Since then a great part of India has been subjugated anew ; her powerful native army, which for years had been pronounced by her wisest Statesmen to be a standing menace to British supremacy in India, has been reduced by one-half, reconstructed and reorganized ; and neither within nor outside her boundaries is there any single native power sufficiently formidable to cause her very serious annoyance, much less to prove in any degree formidable in the field. Her only cause for anxiety lies apparently in the hostile advance of a European power of equal strength towards her confines on the North-West, or such a combination of the heterogeneous elements of combustion as exist in and around her boundaries in this direction, at the instigation or under the auspices of this power, as would severely try her strength, if not shake the foundations of the Empire she has already established.

These tribes, as a rule, are generally at variance amongst themselves, and the formation of a powerful combination of them, if left to themselves, may be looked upon as a remote possibility. But they are mercenary and treacherous, and a little gold scattered amongst them, or the prospect of a little Indian *loot*, would probably stimulate them as efficiently as it no doubt would our excellent friends the Sikhs. The following figures extracted from the reports of Sir R. Temple and Mr. R. H. Davies, late Secretaries to the Government of the Punjab,

will show at a glance, the materials which a hostile power would find ready to its hand if desirous of giving us annoyance.*

| | <i>Fighting men.</i> |
|---|----------------------|
| Independent Tribes from Huzara to Dehra | |
| Ghazee Khan | 115,000 |
| Do. Belooches bordering on Dehra Ghazee | |
| Khan | 20,000 |
| | 135,000 |
| Tribes within the border | 80,000 |
| | 215,300 |

This detail does not include the tribes of Beloochistan, or the Belooch frontiers of Sindh. It will, nevertheless, give the English reader data on which to form some opinion regarding the mischief any European power might effect without ever contemplating the actual invasion of India. And here I may add, that since the year 1850 we have had to make no less than *twenty* military expeditions beyond our frontiers to restrain these tribes from descending into our provinces on their own account and without any external stimulus. In one, moreover, the Sitanah campaign of four years ago, *the moment our arms received a check*, the tribes not only combined against us, but it was proved that

* I take these figures second-hand from a series of able letters by Mr. J. Clarke, sub-editor of the *Englishman*, on the Central Asia Question, published in the *Friend of India*, to whom I am also otherwise indebted.

the whole affair *was fomented if not actually hatched by Mohammedans in the heart of Bengal*. This war gave employment to a regularly equipped army, and cost us the lives of many brave soldiers, including *fifty* officers. How, I would ask, are we prepared even for the eventuality here foreshadowed, much less the invasion of India by a powerful European enemy backed by the military strength of Persia, and the Uzbegs, including the Khanats of Khiva, Kokand and Bokhara, and the whole of Turkistan?

I desire most carefully to avoid even seeming to foster the idea that Russia has any immediate design of invading India. On the contrary, I prefer to consider this calamity as a contingency that may possibly, I will not say probably, be forced on Russia by circumstances beyond her control. It is nevertheless wise to consider, in the event of such a contingency arising, what assistance Russia could calculate upon from Asiatic sources, in addition to her Caucasian army, which has always been separate from her European army, and is now released from the duty which gave it occupation for so many years in the valleys of Daghistan and the Elburz.

The Persian Army is estimated at 100,000 men including artillery. It is probably much less. Still she could doubtless furnish a contingent of 40,000, or, if well supplied with money, even 50,000 regular troops. Vambéry estimates the armies of Bokhara at 40,000, and of Khiva and Kokand at 20,000

each, or 80,000 in all. On an emergency they could, doubtless, furnish also a contingent of about 40,000 men. It is difficult to estimate the resources of Afghanistan in the raw material for soldiers; but I cannot be far wrong in saying that with money she could contribute 100,000 splendid soldiers for so important an event as the invasion of India, with the prospect of avenging herself on the English and on the Hindustanies, and at the same time of plundering Lahore, Umritsur, Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Benares, Bombay and Calcutta.

These figures are of course based on the roughest calculation, and on very imperfect data; but I have no doubt at all that they are estimated at the lowest possible rate, and that the very idea of an invasion of India with any hope of success would rally round the standard of an invader such hordes of fighting men, as rather to prove an embarrassment than the want of them an obstacle to his advance. I allude now however only to regular soldiers, and I think they may be safely estimated thus:—

| | | |
|--------------------------|---------|----------------|
| Persian Contingent | . . . | 50,000 |
| Bokhara | | 20,000 |
| Khiva | | 10,000 |
| Kokand | | 10,000 |
| Afghanistan | | 100,000 |
| Turkomans | | 20,000 |
| Other nationalities, say | | 20,000 |
| | | <hr/> |
| Total Native Force | | <u>230,000</u> |

In short, Russia, *if she could secure Afghanistan, or make her influence paramount in that country*, would have no difficulty whatever in placing under the command of her generalissimo in Central Asia, an army greater in numerical strength than any thing the Government of India could bring into the field, and of very far superior material. This is all I care to establish here, and thus to show that the basis of the whole position rests on the possession of Afghanistan. With a strong and powerful Government ruling in Afghanistan, in close alliance with England, even with the assistance of Persia, I should look upon a Russian invasion of India as a very remote contingency, and its success the next thing to an impossibility. Assuming Afghanistan absorbed, however, let us see how British India would be prepared for what *might* happen.

Before the rebellion of 1857, England had, as just stated, an army of 323,823 fighting men, chiefly for the internal defence of the country and the protection of her frontiers from the raids of border tribes. How stands the case now? On the 1st of August, 1868, accurate returns give the strength of the Indian army, exclusive of officers, as under:—

| | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---------|
| Europeans | . | . | . | . | 56,022 |
| Natives | . | . | . | . | 122,959 |
| | | | | | <hr/> |
| Total Force | . | . | . | . | 178,981 |

Add about 5,400 European officers, and we have in all about 185,000 men. To be liberal in argument,

however, as in all things, let us state the existing strength of the Indian army to be — Europeans, 65,000 ; and Natives, 135,000.

We have thus, all told, an army of 200,000 fighting men, scattered over an area of about 1,400,000 square miles, to maintain the internal peace of the whole continent, and to watch Native Princes having armies in the aggregate of *equal* strength ; and to protect frontiers of some three or four thousand miles in extent, on the north-west corner of which there are lawless tribes mustering some 215,000 fighting men. That is to say we have now about 123,000 native soldiers *less* than was thought necessary for the same purpose before 1857.

It must not be lost sight of, however, that since the reduction of the native army, a military police force has been formed, and this force (I have no data as to its strength at hand) may nearly equal the number of men by which the native army was reduced ; but, armed as it is, in case of risings throughout the country, it would be a source of perhaps greater anxiety to Government than the old native army was. Any how, from this point of view, little if anything has been gained in security, for as long as the police are armed with musketry, they must be very carefully watched. I fear it will be thought that I look only at the dark side of the picture, and am therefore a black prophet. It is not so. I have no wish to forebode evil. I wish simply to lay bare the truth—to describe as accurately as

honesty requires our real position. I believe that while the people of India are contented and happy ; while the native Sovereigns and Princes are on good terms with the Government of India, feel secure in their possessions, and are not too much interfered with ; and while *both* are satisfied that England is a first-class power equal to any emergency that may arise, and is not, as people think in Europe, "afraid to fight," the military police would probably keep the peace, and the great majority of native Princes instead of being a source of alarm would either contribute divisions to the army in the field, or replace the troops withdrawn from British cantonments for foreign service. Still, they might *not*. This, it appears to me, is the nature of our tenure, and, in fair weather or in foul, we ought *never* to allow ourselves to forget it. At best it is a very doubtful, uncertain, and unsatisfactory one ; but I fear that as long as religious and social differences separate the races so completely, though it may be improved, it cannot be rendered completely secure. Our position in India, from all points of view, is anomalous ; and that we have so long continued to maintain it, is more strange and anomalous still. There is all the greater reason then, why we should be very careful indeed to rule so as to gain, if possible, the *affections* of the people, and not to commit any follies which a little foresight may enable us to avoid.

And here I may casually allude to a proposition

which has lately been made, and has been I am told so far approved of as to be considered almost accepted, *viz.* to arm the native soldiery with the Schneider rifle. The grounds assigned for this move I believe are that in the Abyssinian campaign, the native troops were dispirited by finding that their arms were inferior to those of their European fellow-soldiers; that it is unwise to show distrust of our native soldiery; and that the true principle of providing for the military defence of India is to have a small native army, and to make it as efficient, *in every respect* as possible. It is further urged, and by the very same men who argue that if we employ the natives of India we must trust them, that the Schneider rifle is the safest weapon we can put into their hands, because they could not manufacture the ammunition. I do not wish to dispute any of these propositions; possibly they may be all very sound from certain points of view. I would simply remark, that in Abyssinia there was no fighting to dispirit any troops; that with the natives of India, as with other people, honesty is the best policy; that if we *must* trust the natives we should do it wholly and not in *part*, and give them back their artillery; that in all Indian mutinies the first attempt of the mutineers has been to seize an arsenal; and that it is absurd to take thought for the efficiency of the weapons of the Native Army until we have improved its organization. I am quite prepared, however, to admit that the native troops should be

armed with a very much better weapon than old Brown Bess ; but to give them the Schneider rifle within ten years of the sieges of Delhi and Lucknow will, in my humble judgment, be a blunder, regarding which the military historian of ten years hence may have something to say which will be more complimentary to our sentimentality or fool-hardiness than to our wisdom and foresight. The "equality" theory is a mistake, a mischievous mistake which we are too apt to import into all our dealings in the East up to that point at which we find it to fail ; and as it always hitherto has failed when tried, and invariably will fail until the advent of that happy period when an Englishman can be found who will admit that a native of India can be his equal or superior in all respects, the blind adherence to it, if it prove not dangerous, can only result in recriminations and accusations of dishonesty and bad faith. In fact it is exactly this kind of thing which has so lowered the English character in the estimation of the natives of India. They no longer, I regret to say, trust us as they did of old. Runjeet Singh, who was as keen an observer of the characteristics of both natives and Europeans as he was an able administrator and ruler of Asiatics, was of opinion that it was only in extreme cases we should ever allow our European soldiers to go into action in India at all ; and so valuable did he consider the lives of his own European officers that he never permitted them to be exposed to danger. Now without going to the lengths involved in the opinion of this

wily old Sikh Chief, looking to the truly *terrible* straits Great Britain would be in for English regular soldiers, did it so happen that she should be engaged in war in Europe and in India at one and the same time, no precautions that we could take would be too great, against the possibility of being compelled to increase the European portion of our Indian Army by one single soldier. If it be admitted that it was distrust of the native army which rendered it a wise and sound policy to reduce this army by one half, to take the artillery altogether out of native hands, and to add at first thirty thousand, and finally ten or fifteen thousand, men to the strength of the British troops serving in India, and that nothing has since happened to alter the policy of the Government of India in this respect, it will necessarily follow, I should say, that if the destructive power in the hands of the native soldiery is quadrupled, *some* addition should be made to the strength of the guards who are maintained to guard these guards. Can England spare these men? One would almost imagine that those whom I am accusing of not being sufficiently alive to the critical position of our affairs in the East, had been suddenly attacked with a fit of Russophobia, and fancied that the Czar was pouring the hosts of Cossacks, Persians, Uzbegs, and Afghans which we have just been innocently passing in review, through the Bolan and Khyber passes.

But "*Dilli dur ust*,"* as a very common Indian

* Delhi is yet a long way off.

proverb has it. The Russians are yet a very long way off; and, as I may again repeat, their Government has no present intention whatever of invading India. It will be high time, I think, to talk of giving the native soldiery Schneider rifles, when we hear that the Czar has issued orders for arming the native portion of his Central-Asian force with Chassepot or needle guns; or when there is a nearer probability of the Indian army being called upon to meet a European enemy in the field. If our native army could be made available for the service of the Queen in Europe, the case would be altogether different. I myself do not see any insuperable objection to this course: but the question has been argued and decided, I believe, in the negative, so I need not recur to it. I claim for those who take my view of the Eastern or Central-Asian question the character of thoughtful politicians if they be not statesmen, and not alarmists. It is rather with a view to prevent the recurrence of one of those "helpless panics" which so often take possession of the British public in times of difficulty, and which is certain to burst on the do-nothing men when the "masterly inactivity" bubble bursts, than to raise an alarm-cry that they wish to direct attention to this question in time. I think it will be sufficient, therefore, to take the Afghan matchlock and Jazail as the standards we have to excel, and that the better course will be to turn our immediate attention to the re-organization of the

native army on the *regular* instead of the *irregular* system before we trouble ourselves about their arms.

As at present constituted the native army may fulfil the requirements of the Indian Government as long as those requirements are confined to petty frontier wars, in which a force of the strength of a single regiment, or even a brigade or a division of the army is engaged, because drafts of European officers can be drawn from the regiments left in cantonments in other parts of India, or from the reserves of the old Company's army still locked up in the staff corps and local Cadres. But these reserves are growing old, and will soon disappear; even now annual propositions are made to get rid of them.* If the Indian native army, moreover, is to be considered an army capable of undertaking the duties of a military campaign of serious difficulty, or which offers the prospect of active operations in the field for an extended period of time, then I have no hesitation in pronouncing it to be not only most inefficient. I would go further; I would assert that, viewing it as a military machine, it must collapse on the occasion of the first general action. This involves a very serious charge against those who have used their powerful influence to maintain and to extend and perpetuate the present faulty organization of the native armies of India on the irregular system; but

* Since the above was written two propositions for effecting this purpose have been sent home by the Indian Government, for the consideration of the Secretary of State.

if the evidence of scores of valuable *regimental* officers whom I have consulted on this vital point, be of any weight, the inefficiency of the existing system was proved in the Bhootan war, again in the Sitanah campaign, and so firmly convinced am I of the truth of the statement I have here made, that if I may claim any merit, or am permitted to attach any value to the opinions expressed in this paper, I am quite prepared to let them all stand or fall with this portion of it. For the rest the arming of the native army with the Schneider rifle, or any other weapon that may be most in vogue when there is a nearer prospect of necessity arising for its use, is a matter involving simply considerations of the time within which the army could be furnished with the new rifle, the time within which native troops could be familiarized with its use, and the cost of supplying the Indian Government with two hundred thousand of such weapons.

I trust I have been able to make it sufficiently clear to such of my readers as have any understanding that I am neither a Russo-phobist nor an Alarmist in the opprobrious sense in which these terms are applied to the *few* who desire to see England alive to her own interests in the East, by the many who would stifle all inquiry into the real nature of our position. And upon what grounds, I would ask, do they desire to do this? Upon the sole grounds that *our* object is to involve England in an Afghan war, more disastrous than that of 1839-42. But such an

assertion has no foundation in fact, whatever. As I understand the views of those Eastern politicians who think with me, their object is the very reverse. They wish to secure and to maintain the "balance," the *status quo*, between the two great Powers—without war. It is War which of all things they wish to avoid and avert; and they think that it would be more advantageous to England to grapple with the difficulty now before Russia is ready, than to wait until she will be in a *very much better* position to court a struggle than England. Doubtless, there is a very large proportion of military men in India, who would be very glad to see active service, and who care very little whether the call of duty leads them to Abyssinia, to Afghanistan, to Kamskatska, or to Japan; and nothing could possibly be more gratifying to H.R.H. the General Commanding in Chief or the Secretary of War than to have such good proof that that *feu sacré* which is the vital element in all armies, has not yet been extinguished in the Indian army. Doubtless, also, the writings of a section of the Indian press have been tempered to some extent by the military ardour of its correspondents. At the same time it is very well known that the Indian army has ever contained in its ranks very many officers who have proved themselves to be as able politicians as they are brave and gallant soldiers; and it is not to be assumed that eight or ten out of a dozen editors would be unable to dis-

tinguish the wheat from the chaff, and that consequently all the opinions on this serious question which have been expressed in their columns, have no more solid basis than the desire of a few of the junior officers of the Indian army to gain promotion. Where there is *much* smoke there is certain to be *some* fire. Instead therefore of ridiculing the warning notes which have reached England from India, and calming the British Lion by representing these signals to be simply the oft-repeated cry of "wolf;" instead of singing lullabies to John Bull full of assurances regarding his perfect security, solely because he is believed to be drowsy and inclined to sleep, I think it would be very much more satisfactory to the public to find the press of England setting themselves cautiously, carefully, and steadily to examine and ascertain truly what is the exact amount of fire concealed under this very large quantity of smoke. By this means they would place themselves in a better position to criticise the shifting and shuffling policy which the Indian government of yesterday has been adopting in its abortive efforts to deal with the Central-Asian difficulty. They would then also be better qualified to give good advice to Her Majesty's Government and the British public, than recommending them blindly to acquiesce in and accept unintelligible theories. And they would be able to express generally sounder opinions on this great question than I have hitherto seen in

the columns of some, though I am bound to say not all, of the leading journals of the Metropolis.*

These writers usually start off by misstating the facts of the case; and as it is a principle in logic that where the premises of an argument are false the conclusion, however logical the reasoning may be, must be false also, they cannot arrive at very sound results. Thus, to summarize the reviews of these writers, they state generally that “the cry from Indian alarmists is “not only for the invasion of Afghanistan, but even “for its seizure and annexation to British India, “and the impelling of a grand army to meet the “Russians upon the banks of the Oxus. The ostensible object,” it is added, “for which this precipitate course is recommended, is to be beforehand “with Russia, and to prevent *her* from executing “this smart *coup-de-main*, as a preliminary to the “invasion of India; but that in reality, it emanates “from the strong desire which all armies in general “have, and which the Indian army in particular has “for military distinction and promotion. But “Russia,” it is urged, “has *no* intention of invading “or annexing *Afghanistan*; and if she has, by “all means let her do both; she would be a better “neighbour than the ‘hereditary brigands’ who “now infest our North West frontier, and keep us

* Since the above was written a very great change has taken place in the opinions of some of the leading journalists. See especially an admirable article in the “Times” of the 24th of February last. I cannot too highly commend the views of this writer.

“ in a state of chronic warfare. It is needless,
 “ therefore, to evince any signs of alarm at the
 “ advance of Russia towards our Indian frontiers,
 “ or at her rapid subjugation of Central Asia. On
 “ the contrary, her progress as tending to hasten
 “ the approach of that period when we may hope
 “ to be relieved from the necessity of maintaining
 “ an army of 15,000 Europeans, for the exclusive
 “ purpose of protecting this frontier from these
 “ ‘ hereditary brigands ’ and a state of interminable
 “ strife, ought to be looked upon as a subject for
 “ very great congratulation.”

“ Russia again,” it is said, “ has no intention of
 “ invading *India*, and if she had she could not
 “ accomplish it because she has neither men nor
 “ money. Looking however at the invasion of India
 “ by Russia as an event of remote possibility which
 “ our great grand-children may live to witness, the
 “ Indus and not the Oxus is the natural boundary of
 “ Hindustan, the barrier chain of mountains beyond it
 “ is our true line of defence, and the Punjab, where we
 “ have railway communication with the sea, is the
 “ proper place to meet the forces which any invading
 “ power may precipitate upon us. But assuming that
 “ the danger anticipated should occur in our own time,
 “ and that all the hordes that Russia could marshal
 “ in her train, were marching on the line of the
 “ Indus, what of it? They would be exterminated
 “ as they debouched from the Passes. And”—
 for so self-satisfied are the writers of the optimist

school that they do not stop short of *any* contingency—"admitting even that the invader made "good his entry into our territories, what of it "also? '*As long as the people obey, the Govern- "ment of India could raise a million of soldiers in "six weeks, arm them, expend them, and renew their "armaments without the sense of fatigue or over- "strain, and with no further injury than the neces- "sity for raising a twenty million loan at home.'*"*

"The conclusions which will follow from this "review," it is stated, "are those which any sensible "man may arrive at for himself: that the Franken- "stein which has been created in India is a myth, "that the alarms which the Russo-phobists have "sounded are utterly groundless; that the course "which these alarmists recommend for adoption "would involve a wanton expenditure of men and "money, and must end in miserable disaster; and "that consequently the true and only sound policy "to adopt in regard to Central-Asian politics, is that "which the Government of India has hitherto pur- "sued, and which it has almost publicly announced "that it means to follow, *viz.*, '*Masterly Inactivity.*' "Finally that the present Governor-General of In- "dia is entitled to the most brilliant encomiums "of the English press, and the highest rewards

* This passage I have thought it advisable to quote verbatim, lest it may be thought that I have intentionally overstated the case against that portion of the English Press which has written as it were *ex cathedra* on this question.

“ and honours the State can bestow, for being instrumental in saving the Empire from bankruptcy, and from those disasters into which a section of the Indian public, including some of his own advisers, are so desirous of recklessly plunging it.”

It would be a waste of time for any one who claims to possess the smallest qualifications for discussing this important question, to attempt to reply seriously and *seriatim* to statements and assertions such as are contained in the above *resumé*. The writers while professing to lead public opinion are only following it; and will be quite prepared to veer right round, and be the first to do so when the shadow of coming events in India compels the British public to recollect that England has other things to look after besides the Irish Church and the extension of the franchise. Indeed they are already wavering, from which I gather that the time when the public are about to learn that they have all along been deceived by these false prophets is nearer than I had imagined. I might therefore omit all notice of these opinions; but, unfortunately, so very few in England are competent to understand any Eastern question, and are so much obliged to any one who will think for them on such subjects, that I think it necessary to say a few words in reply to one or two of the statements contained in the above review, lest they again crop up or may still be believed in by any.

First of all, I must repeat for the second or third time, that no wise statesman could ever have contemplated the *hostile* entry of a British force into Afghanistan. Such a move would be suicidal; it is even within the bounds of possibility that it might imperil the existence of our Eastern Empire, and would certainly be an incalculable gain to Russia. It would make enemies for us, of those whose co-operation is a *sine qua non* to the successful invasion or indeed any invasion of India from the Northwest, and throw that country, which it would be impossible for us to hold against the will of the people, into the hands of the Russ. To aid in the formation of a strong government in Afghanistan and to establish the utmost *entente cordiale* between our Government and the Afghans is the very key of the position taken up by those who are opprobriously termed Russo-phobists. Indeed, setting aside these considerations, if the maintenance of the internal peace of India on any thing like a permanent footing be necessary to the crystallization of those administrative reforms which barely ten years ago were commenced, the attainment of this object is, in my humble judgment, of such singular importance, that the expenditure *within reasonable limits*, of any amount of men and money, would be justifiable, provided we could see a fair probability of its accomplishment. Yet, strange to say, the converse of this proposition, *viz.*, that the invasion of Afghanistan is *our* aim, is the trump card, and the sole

trump card, with which the advocates of “Masterly Inactivity” have been accustomed to meet those who have opposed what to them appears an unintelligible policy. I have taken some pains to disencumber the question of this misconception, because, having reference to the dread of military operations and war expenditure, which seems of late years to have asserted a paramount influence over the nervous system of John Bull, and the knowledge of Eastern politics which many of the advocates of the do-nothing policy are supposed to and certainly ought to possess, I cannot divest my mind of the idea, that this argument has been used by them rather in an *ad captandum* sense than as one proceeding from a firm conviction in the soundness of the course they recommend for adoption.

For the rest, the position taken up by the writers in the Press before alluded to would seem, as lately pointed out by the writer of the able letters in the *Friend of India*, referred to at p. 27, to be based upon a single passage in the writings of a very great man, perhaps I may say, not only one of the greatest statesmen and politicians, but the most excellent and best man the Indian services have ever produced. I allude to the late lamented Sir Henry Lawrence; a name which cannot be mentioned in India without exciting profound sorrow and respect. The passage is so very remarkable a one, that I will here quote it:—

“Insensibly and almost by *coup-de-main*, the

“ Russian Empire has been extended for thirteen
 “ thousand miles across the whole Continent of
 “ Europe and Asia, and for twenty degrees over
 “ America. Curbed to the south and west Russia
 “ has not waited an hour to push forward her
 “ soldiers, her sailors, her savans, her engineers,
 “ and her labourers to the Caspian, to the Aral, and
 “ even to the mighty Amoor. Her old policy will
 “ now more vigorously than ever be pursued, and
 “ though the dream of a century will never be
 “ realised, *her position in Persia will speedily be*
 “ *strengthened, and posts will be established in Cen-*
 “ *tral Asia and even in China.* Bomarsunds, if
 “ not Sebastopols, will arise at Orenburg, Astra-
 “ kan, and Astrabad, perhaps even at Balkh and
 “ Herat. The wave has receded, to return with
 “ redoubled force, though at a different angle. Such
 “ has ever been and will be Russia’s policy. There
 “ will be no Russian invasion of India, nor probably
 “ will the tribes be impelled on us. *The latter*
 “ *now understand our strength*; Russia has long
 “ understood both our strength and our weak-
 “ ness. There will be no foolish raid *as long as*
 “ *India is united in tranquillity and contentment,*
 “ *under British rule.* Russia well knows that such
 “ an attempt would only end in the entire destruction
 “ of the invaders. India has been invaded some
 “ forty times, but always by small armies acting in
 “ communication with domestic parties. *A small*
 “ *Russian army could not make good its way through*

“ *Afghanistan, a large army would be starved there*
 “ *in a week.* The largest army that could come
 “ with Afghanistan and Persia in its train, would be
 “ met at the outlets of the only two practical passes,
 “ and while attempting to debouch would be knocked
 “ into pieces. *A hundred thousand Anglo-Indian*
 “ *troops might, with the help of railroads, be collected*
 “ *at each pass in a few days,* as it would take an un-
 “ opposed Russian army weeks to traverse them.
 “ Hundreds of eight-inch guns would there be
 “ opposed to their field-pieces. The danger then is
 “ imaginary. Herat is no more the key to India
 “ than is Tabreez, or Khiva, or Kokan, or Meshed.
 “ The chain of almost impenetrable mountains is the
 “ real key to India. England’s own experience in
 “ the western passes, and in the Crimea, have
 “ proved the absurdity of the tale of Russian in-
 “ vasion. No, the dream is idle : *England’s dangers*
 “ *are in India, not without ; and we trust that it will*
 “ *be in India they will be met, and that there will be no*
 “ *third Afghan campaign.* *Such a move would be*
 “ *playing Russia’s game.* *We are safe while we*
 “ *hold our ground and do our duty.* Russia may
 “ tease, annoy, and frighten us by her money and by
 “ emissaries. She may even do us mischief, but she
 “ will never put her foot in Hindostan.”

But that this passage may be read aright, and be accurately understood in all its bearings, it should be remembered that it was written in the early part of 1856, immediately *after* the signing of the Treaty

of peace; and immediately *before* the Indian mutiny and rebellion of 1857-8. It will be seen, that Sir Henry Lawrence, starting from the same premises as I have done in this paper regarding the aggressive policy of Russia, foresaw and accurately sketched out, upwards of *twelve* years ago, the course which Russia, after her defeat in the Crimea, would pursue in the East; that the movements of this Power up to the present, have been entirely in accordance with what this wise politician prophesied they would be; and that, to complete the picture he has drawn, there is still much left for her to do, which no doubt she will accomplish "in the fulness of her time." It must be admitted then that if the race of Indian politicians who have succeeded this great and good man have failed to appreciate, at an earlier period, the *possible* designs of Russia in the East, and to discount the results of her policy, they are either deficient in that foresight, which is the distinguishing characteristic of all truly wise and great statesmen, or we will be thrown back on the worse alternative, that with the future clearly sketched out before them, and having their eyes wide open, they have preferred to *affect* a blindness to a course of events which, at no distant date, may seriously imperil the internal peace of our Indian empire, if it bring not in its train more disastrous results. When Sir Henry Lawrence stated that the Hill tribes would not be impelled upon us, because they now understood our strength, the Sitanah cam-

paign, in which we lost nearly 900 men, of whom 50 were officers, had not taken place, and he did not calculate upon a *combination of the border tribes being fomented by rebels in the very heart of Bengal*. The wisest and most cautious politician we have ever had would hardly have dreamt of this. He did, however, foresee and foretell, as other wise men did, the mutiny of the native army; but what he did not foresee or foretell, was the time at which it would take place; and for the very best of reasons, viz., that he *could not* do so. The Bengal army was no more ripe for mutiny on the 11th of May, 1857, than it was for a quarter of a century before that date. The whole affair was an accident, which might have taken place at any time within that period, had any of the many military *emeutes* which occurred gained sufficient head to implicate any very large body of native troops. The terrible calamity of 1857 might possibly have been postponed up to the present hour had there been an able and energetic commander at Meerut at the moment. A similar disaster may occur again, at any time, if the native element becomes stronger, and knows and feels that it is stronger than the European, and the Government of India goes to sleep. The warlike races in India, and especially the Sikhs and Mohammedans would like nothing better. As to loyalty it is simply "trash," and I have no patience with those who speak nonsense about it. There is *some* sense in the idea of ruling

prove “the absurdity of the tale of Russian invasion;” “the dream,” he continues, “is idle:” and he adds that though “she may tease, annoy, and frighten us by her money and by emissaries,” and “may even do us mischief,” she “will never put her foot in Hindostan.” I do not go quite as far as this; and I think that this great and good man were he now living, would probably like to qualify somewhat this statement. On the contrary, I firmly believe that Russia, unless the disruption of her mighty Empire should intervene to shatter her colossal strength, *will* set her foot in Hindostan; and that the collision of these two Powers, unless some such misfortune should overtake Russia, is morally inevitable. I am of opinion, however, that if the State vessel in India be guided with only ordinary skill, it is quite possible, even under present circumstances, to make our position so secure, as to free the *present* generation from all anxiety regarding such a contingency; while at the same time I believe if any truckling to ignorant and infatuated public opinion, any culpable dread of responsibility, or any misguided optimism be allowed to interpose to prevent this question from being firmly grappled with, that it is quite as possible to precipitate us, with a rapidity un contemplated even by the most rabid Russo-phobists, into a state of things which it would only require an European war to bring to the dreaded climax. In *such* a contingency Russia would be at an *immense* dis-

advantage no doubt ; for, under no possible circumstances, can she be prepared for this event for a very considerable time ; but what would be the loss of 100,000 soldiers to Russia, in comparison with the disasters such an event might bring upon England ? Nothing !

It will be observed, moreover, that Sir H. Lawrence's arguments are entirely directed against the idea of a *hostile* invasion of Afghanistan, which no doubt has been the dream of very many young officers who have more military ardour than political foresight or prudence, ever since the Punjaub was annexed to British India. "Such a move," he says as I say, and every sensible man must say, "would be playing the game of Russia." But in another place he says, "We repeat that our arrangements are for the storm as well as the sunshine, for a Russian Army at Herat, simultaneously with an American fleet at Bombay." And again, "We repeat that nothing was done on the treaty of peace (Vienna) to control Russia in Asia." In short, *it is as clear* as noon-day, that this wise and thoughtful statesman saw the necessity of securing the neutrality of Afghanistan, if not its alliance and co-operation with the government of British India. Upon this point—the integrity of the independence of Afghanistan—hinges *one half* of the whole question ; and *the other half* lies concealed under the warning, *thrice* repeated in the above few lines, *viz.*, (1) "there will be no foolish raid as long as India

prove “the absurdity of the tale of Russian invasion;” “the dream,” he continues, “is idle:” and he adds that though “she may tease, annoy, and frighten us by her money and by emissaries,” and “may even do us mischief,” she “will never put her foot in Hindostan.” I do not go quite as far as this; and I think that this great and good man were he now living, would probably like to qualify somewhat this statement. On the contrary, I firmly believe that Russia, unless the disruption of her mighty Empire should intervene to shatter her colossal strength, *will* set her foot in Hindostan; and that the collision of these two Powers, unless some such misfortune should overtake Russia, is morally inevitable. I am of opinion, however, that if the State vessel in India be guided with only ordinary skill, it is quite possible, even under present circumstances, to make our position so secure, as to free the *present* generation from all anxiety regarding such a contingency; while at the same time I believe if any truckling to ignorant and infatuated public opinion, any culpable dread of responsibility, or any misguided optimism be allowed to interpose to prevent this question from being firmly grappled with, that it is quite as possible to precipitate us, with a rapidity un contemplated even by the most rabid Russo-phobists, into a state of things which it would only require an European war to bring to the dreaded climax. In *such* a contingency Russia would be at an *immense* dis-

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“ is united, in tranquillity and contentment, under
 “ British rule : ” (2) “ England’s dangers are in
 “ India, not without ; ” and (3) “ we are safe while
 “ we hold our ground and do our duty.”

This brings me at once to the consideration of the foreign policy which has been pursued in India of late years, and which has been so very much lauded by a certain section of the English Press. This policy was reviewed at length, and defended in the *Edinburgh Review* in a clever article in the end of 1866. The article was written by the then Under Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, and may, therefore, be considered semi-official. It was there defined to be a “masterly inactivity,” which phrase, probably from its novelty, has been generally adopted by the public. But the definition, it appears to me, is an incongruous one, for it involves a contradiction of terms, and as applied to the policy it meant to describe, is certainly a misnomer. It may be a wise and judicious and very sound policy for a Government under certain circumstances to do nothing ; but a state or condition in which none of the faculties or powers except *vis inertia* are called into play, and which requires the exhibition of no skill, can hardly be termed “masterly.” I can conceive one case, but only one case, at all similar in circumstances, in which the term “masterly” might with some propriety be applied to “inactivity,” and it is this :

If, *c.g.* a Statesman, secure in the loyalty of his

people, and strong in his military resources, saw an enemy marching in the direction of his frontiers or his position, attacking strong fortresses, engaging in general actions with doubtful success, encountering the difficulties and dangers of long and fatiguing marches combined with the privations of hunger and thirst, and severities of cold or heat involving much loss of life ;—if after encountering all this there still intervened between the remnants of this enemy's forces and the goal of his ambition another wild and mountainous country, three or four hundred miles broad, bristling with hostile and warlike races, where food for a small army could be obtained with difficulty, and for a large one not at all, and where the most determined resistance in addition to guerilla cutting-up, was certain to be met with ;—and if beyond this country there lay an impassable chain of mountains with but two small holes to creep through,—if I say, a Statesman found himself called upon to meet such a condition of things, then it might be a wise and judicious policy in that Statesman to suffer the extremes of provocation, and to resist the utmost taunts of the press and the public before committing his Government to any line of conduct which might involve the country in the smallest expenditure of either men or money. Under these circumstances it would undoubtedly be good statesmanship to remain not only profoundly passive, but to look on even approvingly at the operations of the enemy, because there would be a

very strong probability that he would never reach the mountain barrier at all; or, if he did, it could only be with the remnant of a half-starved demoralised and dispirited army, which there would be a moral certainty of very easily annihilating as it was creeping through the only two small holes left open for its ingress. There would be something "masterly," perhaps, in "inactivity" under these or similar circumstances; but the definition would be applicable solely on the grounds, that the statesman in question, having had the wisdom and the judgment to foresee that the enemy, if left alone, would ultimately accomplish his own destruction, had preferred to permit him to do so, instead of involving his country in a bloody war at great cost for the attainment of an end which could be secured without it.

Such was the position, *i.e.* the assumed position, a quarter of a century ago, and therefore when Sir John Cam Hobhouse and Lord Auckland plunged Great Britain into the Afghan War of 1839-42, Sir John Cam Hobhouse and Lord Auckland committed an egregious blunder. The melancholy consequences of this blunder have ever since been actively at work to our detriment within British India itself, in a manner it would be very difficult for any British statesman thoroughly to understand. Most Englishmen, however, are well aware that the Afghan campaign of 1839-42 lasted upwards of three years; that it involved us in terrible disasters,

and great loss of men and money; that it very seriously damaged our prestige in the East; and that all we got in return for the loss of our honour, our men, and our money, were the gates of Somnath.* Indeed so vividly are the disasters of the former Afghan campaign still impressed upon the memories of the present generation, that I firmly believe it to be the recollection of these disasters, and a kind of indistinct idea prevailing in England that similar disasters are inseparable from military operations in Afghanistan, which has been the most active agent both in originating the policy of “masterly inactivity” in India, and in initiating the unqualified terms of praise with which the announcement of this policy has been received by the majority of the public at home.

But if such was the position, real or assumed, in 1839, or even a much shorter time ago; and if, under the circumstances sketched out above, and only under those circumstances, “inactivity” might intelligibly if not properly be termed “masterly,” it will follow, without the aid of any arguments in support of the proposition, that there could be nothing whatever “masterly” about such a policy in

* I do not mean this remark as a sneer at Lord Ellenborough. Had he or some equally able statesman not succeeded Lord Auckland, I do believe that not one single man of the Afghanistan field force would ever have recrossed the Sutlege. Yet Sir John Cam Hobhouse was rewarded by a Peerage; and Lord Ellenborough was recalled!

1867-68. Instead of the whole of her grand army being exhausted and there being any prospect of its ultimate annihilation, Russia in an incredibly short space of time, and with but one division, and that a small division of her Asiatic army, has accomplished one half of the distance which lay between her and our frontiers; she has subdued armies, absorbed kingdoms, and is engaged in settling the countries in her rear, without having met with any of those astounding difficulties and disasters which were so confidently predicted by the Optimists to lie in her path. More unfortunately for these politicians the wild and warlike races of the inhospitable regions which yet intervene between her and the rich plains of India, who were to hang on the rear, to harass and half-starve the Russian army, instead of being united in strength, and in a position to oppose any serious resistance to an invading force, are weakened and prostrated by a long and bloody civil war. Worse still, as before mentioned, the sources for the supply of the 200,000 native troops, who were to aid in knocking the remnants of the invader's grand army into pieces as it debouched from the passes, have, in great part, dried up; and must inevitably annually become less prolific as the country gradually settles down under the reforms of civil government, which undoubtedly have been steadily and rapidly progressing within the last ten or twelve years.

In my humble judgment, if, under such circum-

stances, "inactivity" could, with propriety or otherwise, be said to be "masterly," it is from a Russian point of view, and from no other.

But although it is plain from what I have just said that I am of opinion that "inactivity" in the foreign policy of our Indian Government, unless proceeding from ignorance or errors of judgment, amounts almost to something which could only be defined by a word I cannot use,—it remains to be inquired has this Government, in pursuing its policy of "inactivity," been systematic and consistent? Has the state of passive observation been throughout steadily observed?—in short, is the course which the Government of India has pursued in regard to its Foreign Affairs, worthy of the dignity of being called a Policy at all?

It is almost unnecessary for me to repeat at this late stage of the argument that I am not and never have been an advocate for the entry of a British force, either as friend or foe, into Afghanistan. Not that, with the experiences of Nott's and Sale's Brigades before me, I share at all in the nervous dread the prophets of disaster entertain on this point; but simply because, looking at the chess-board as it stood two years ago, I did not see, nor looking at it as it at present stands do I yet see, any necessity for such a move. But it seems to me, (notwithstanding that the Optimists, with a view to render their arguments more palatable to John Bull, will never admit it,) that a mean might

have been found between plunging the Empire into military operations, the end of which could not be foreseen by any, and utter "inactivity," be it "masterly" or the reverse, the end of which might have been and was foreseen by many. And I venture to think that the way to this "happy mean," was so clear that almost the blind might have stumbled upon it.

It was to be *active* and vigilant; to lose no opportunity of strengthening our relations with the Persian Government; to be equally active and energetic in our endeavours to aid our ally, the lawful Ameer of Cabul, in establishing a strong Government in Afghanistan; to be most cautious in the administration of both our home and foreign policy in India not to do anything to alarm the native Princes, or to render our rule distasteful to our native subjects generally; and finally to complete the railway system between Kurachee and Lahore, and Lahore and Peshawar, and strongly to fortify our line of defences.

True, our efforts might not have been either wholly or even partially successful; nay, I will go so far as to admit, that they might have precipitated events which sooner or later *must* take place, but I am prepared to assert, in the face of any contradiction, that this line of action would have been sound policy, and that if it did hurry the parturition of events, the result would have found us in a *commanding* position.

With regard to Persia, our relations with that

Government are now in the hands of Her Majesty's Government; and I have not sufficient information on the subject to enter on a discussion of this portion of the subject, which is nevertheless of singular importance. But though anxious regarding Persia, I am aware that the state of our relations with that Power have been very carefully watched by one who of all men living is most competent to give Her Majesty's Government not only information, but very sound advice on what is termed the Central-Asian Question in *all* its bearings. I allude to Sir Henry Rawlinson. I will simply add, therefore, that the rumours which reach India both from the North-west and through the Persian Gulf represent the influence of Russia in Persia to have gained such an ascendancy with the Government of the *Shahinshah* as to be almost paramount. There may be some exaggeration in these rumours, but their existence is as undoubted as it is significant. Most probably Her Majesty's Government are fully alive to the importance of rendering British influence as powerful in Persia as her commanding position in the Persian Gulf give the British public a right to expect that it shall be. There is this again to be said on the one side, that Russia being a nearer neighbour to Persia than we are, her agents meet us on advantageous grounds in any diplomatic manœuvres in the Cabinet Councils of the *Shahinshah*. The game here may be said to be played on tolerably equal terms.

But how stands the case with Afghanistan? Here, up to the present, Russia has had no footing whatever. The only Power who had any influence was Great Britain. It is idle to say that she had *no* influence; and that when, during the Persian war, an Envoy was sent to Candahar, he was no better than a prisoner. The assertion alone, if true, would involve the most complete condemnation of the foreign policy of the Government of India. But it is *not* true. The Indian Government had, or might have had influence, not only in Afghanistan, but even beyond it, if an *active* line of policy had been pursued,—one more in accordance with England's honour as well as her opportunities. Otherwise why the appeal from Kokand, why the mission from Bokhara, and why the repeated appeals of Shere Ali for help, and of his brothers for a recognition only by the British Government of their sovereignty?

And how have these opportunities been used for the advancement of British interests and for the maintenance beyond our frontiers of the integrity of our power and the belief in our supremacy in the East? Our policy is said to have been one of "masterly inactivity," which I have asserted to be in opposition to the dictates of common sense; to be in short not only an erroneous but a vicious policy. I am now about to demonstrate that it has been worse. If the Indian Government has been *inactive* in general it has been *most* active in those very respects where wisdom required that it should

have been passive. With the Khans of Kokand and Bokhara, and the other Khanates of Central Asia we had, I believe, simply friendly relations. They are not our neighbours, and though had the events which have lately taken place been foreseen by the Indian Government as well as by others, it might have been desirable to have *tried*, at least, to induce all the principal powers of Central Asia to see their advantage in a combination of their strength against foreign invasion; up to a very late period, the desirability of improving our relations with these distant principalities might not have obtruded itself on even a very cautious statesman were he not forewarned. But with the successor of Dost Mohammed we had a treaty; an alliance of a binding nature, and looking to the name appended thereto, though its existence may have been ignored, it is not likely to have been forgotten by the Government of India. It is so short that I subjoin the text in *extenso*.

ARTICLE 1ST.—Between the Honorable East India Company and His Highness Ameer Dost Mohummud Khan, Wálee of Cabool and of those countries of Affghanistan now in his possession, and the heirs of the said Ameer, there shall be perpetual peace and friendship.

ARTICLE 2ND.—The Honorable East India Company engages to respect those Territories of Affghanistan now in His Highness's possession, and never to interfere therein.

ARTICLE 3RD.—His Highness Ameer Dost Mohummud Khan, Wálee of Cabool and of those countries of Affghanistan now in his possession, engages on his own part, and on the part of his heirs, to respect the territories of the Honorable

East India Company, and never to interfere therein; and to be the friend of the friends and enemy of the enemies of the Honorable East India Company.

Done at Peshawur this 30th day of March, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty-five, corresponding with the Eleventh day of Rujjub, One Thousand Two Hundred and Seventy-one Hijree.

Seal.

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

Seal of Gholam
Hyder, heir
apparent.

As the representative of Ameer Dost Mohummud Khan, and in person on his own account as heir apparent.

Ratified by the Most Noble the Governor General at Ootakamund, the first day of May, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-five.

(Signed) DALHOUSIE.

By order of the Most Noble the Governor-General.

(Signed) G. F. EDMONSTONE,
Secy. to the Govt. of India,
with the Governor-General.

Seal.

It will be observed that this Treaty is so far one-sided, that it does not stipulate that the British Government shall take up arms in defence of the integrity of the Afghan kingdom. Still it places the two Governments in the same position as other high contracting parties to similar engagements, and recognizes the heir and legitimate successor to Dost Mohammed, as the sovereign of the kingdom bequeathed to him. When a bloody civil war broke out, and the Ameer found himself

in straits, instead of giving our ally even that moral support which, looking to our position on the Afghan frontier, not only circumstances and the immense political importance to us of maintaining a strong Government in Afghanistan, but an honourable regard for our treaty obligations required, the Government of India turned a deaf ear to his appeals for help. Adopting the very new European principle of allowing nationalities to settle their own form of Government, it informed Shere Ali, amidst a shower of high-flown compliments, and a profusion of regrets for the misfortunes which had overtaken him, that it could not interfere; that he must settle his affairs as he best could; and that the British Government would be glad to learn that he had been able to do so satisfactorily. The immediate effects of this move were, of course, to prove to Shere Ali the worthlessness of his treaty engagements with the British Government as any stand-by towards retaining his throne, or indeed for any purpose whatever except his own disadvantage; and as satisfying the rebels, that under *no* circumstances would he obtain help of any kind from the British Government materially to weaken the cause of our ally.

Still there would have been something to be said in favour of this line of conduct *had it been steadily pursued to the end*. However unsuited to circumstances and preconceived notions of Asiatic politics, and however much at variance with the principle

upon which we have defended interference with native Princes in India to the extent of making anarchy and a state of civil war a justification for the confiscation of kingdoms,—it would have been in strict accordance with the policy adopted *and followed out* by Her Majesty's Government in like cases in Europe, and steadily maintained for four years during the late American struggle for disunion. But what was the *denouement* of this act of the Central-Asian drama? The party of the rebels under Afzul Khan daily gained strength; the power of the Ameer daily declined. Finally, the party of the former gained a temporary ascendancy; Cabul and Candahar fell into his hands; and the Ameer was obliged to retreat towards the north. And that this unfortunate result was in a great measure accelerated, if not indirectly brought about by the attitude of the Government of India, and its cold refusal to recognize the claims of Shere Ali, under our treaty obligations, to any kind of assistance, I have no doubt whatever. Indeed, that I am justified in attaching this importance to the utter abandonment of the cause of our ally, and so giving weight to the assertion I have elsewhere made, that we *had* influence in Afghanistan, and that this influence might have been exercised with beneficial effect, the course of events affords, to my mind, convincing proof. The *very first* act of the rebel chief was to announce his successes to the Government of India, and to apply to the Viceroy

to recognize him as the lawful sovereign of Afghanistan. *Could* such a request, I ask, have been preferred, if Afzul Khan had not been of opinion that we had abandoned Shere Ali; *would* such a request have been preferred, if Afzul Khan attached no value to the recognition he solicited—if, in short, he was of opinion that it would bring no strength to his arms? Most certainly not. He knew perfectly well that it would be a very powerful help to his cause; and for this reason only he made his appeal. He asked for the recognition of his Sovereignty and for nothing more.

Regard for the consistency of the policy that had been adopted, regard for the honour and good faith of the British nation as one of the contracting parties to the treaty with the lawful sovereign of the kingdom, regard for every principle of both sound policy and diplomatic foresight and craftship which was worthy of regard, demanded that Afzul Khan's appeal should have been rejected. The case was undoubtedly one in which, even setting aside the above considerations altogether, the instincts of common sense dictated "inactivity." And what did the Government of India do? Immediately recognise Afzul Khan as Ameer of Afghanistan? No! it did something, in my humble judgment, very much more startling.

In so great a hurry was the Government of India in *this* instance to abandon its avowed policy of "masterly inactivity" or non-interference in the

politics of Central-Asia, that, while the rightful sovereign, our ally, was still in the field fighting for his kingdom, and admitted to be in possession of what has been called, whether rightly or wrongly, "the Key of India," it went out of its way to perform, perhaps, one of the most remarkable feats of statesmanship that the annals of British India furnish. It replied to Afzul Khan in friendly terms, acknowledging him as Ruler of Cabul and Candahar; and at the same time declared its intention of recognizing Shere Ali as Ruler of Herat, a kingdom which at the time had no existence at all.

When Yar Mahommad Khan ruled at Herat and there were three Chiefs in Afghanistan, its affairs were like an open sore to all its neighbours and to the Foreign Office. Above all things to be desired was a strong and united Kingdom under one Sovereign Ruler. Thus *Her Majesty's Government* a few years previously, during the Viceroyalty of Earl Canning, had declared war against Persia, and, at a cost to the revenues of India of about *three millions* sterling,* equipped and dispatched to the Persian Gulf a large army for the express purpose of maintaining the integrity of Herat as an integral portion of the kingdom of Afghanistan. The Government of India without any previous

* I make this statement with reserve. I think the cost of this war was £3,500,000; but whether it was half a million sterling more or less, will not affect the argument in the slightest degree.

communication with the Secretary of State, and with as little regard for that principle of British policy, for which this three millions sterling was spent to maintain, as for its treaty obligations, proclaimed Afghanistan to be dismembered, and that it was prepared to recognize any one as a King who could make himself master of any considerable portion of it. All I will say is, that if this is "inactivity" it is certainly "masterly" with a vengeance.

I have no wish to conduct a crusade against the Government of India, or to attack Sir John Lawrence or any one else. The question, as I view it, is infinitely too serious in its nature to all the nations of Europe as well as to Great Britain, to be made controversial. My own conscientious opinion, is one of complete condemnation of the entire policy pursued by the Government of India, in regard to its treatment of the Central-Asian question, and the above episode in that policy seems to have attracted so little attention in proportion to its importance that it is absolutely necessary for me in stating the case, to explain very clearly the false position in which this unfortunate move has placed the British Government in regard to its relations with foreign Princes in general, and with any future ruler of Afghanistan in particular. And, at the same time, I think it would be the height of injustice to Sir John Lawrence's successor to conceal the nature of the difficulties with which this question has been

surrounded and complicated *before* he assumes the reins of Government. For let us avail ourselves of the light of subsequent events to glance at and review the situation, from the platform now attained.

If it be of any importance at all to do nothing to confirm the idea which has taken firm hold of the minds of Asiatic Princes, *viz.* that our treaties are nothing more than documents to be turned to our own advantage when it suits our purposes, the opportunity here offered of doing that nothing was thrown away.* Afzul Khan was killed and his brother Azim Khan succeeded to his throne, and to the honour, *quantum valeat*, of his British alliance. But so far was Shere Ali from having been discarded by his subjects, as he was by his ally, that it was not *very* long before he regained his strength, and after a succession of military operations with various results, he finally defeated Azim Khan and his nephew in a grand pitched battle, and having been once again proclaimed King of Afghanistan with very great enthusiasm, gradually recovered possession of all that he had lost, whilst Azim Khan and Abd al-Rahmàn Khan as fugitives sought an asylum in British territory. Native report gives colour to the surmise that Shere Ali was assisted in his struggle by Russian gold ; and it has been as-

* So fixed has this idea become in India, that the King of Ava, on the conclusion of the last Burmese war, positively refused to enter into any treaty with us, on the ground that British treaties were simply pretexts for annexing kingdoms.

serted that he has entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with Russia. Indeed with so much confidence is this assertion made, that the conditions of this supposed treaty have been published, and contain a provision that while Shere Ali is to be recognized as an independent Sovereign, Russia is to have the right of garrisoning any of his towns. As these rumours however are not authenticated, I forbear to attach any importance to them; but of one thing there can be no doubt whatever, that Shere Ali, failing in his appeals for help to the Government of India, did appeal to both Persia and the Russian Generalissimo, and I think we may very reasonably conclude that his overtures met with a somewhat better reception from the latter than was given to them at Simla or in Calcutta.

But whether Shere Ali was or was not assisted by Russia to regain possession of his kingdom is not a question which enters the discussion at this stage of the argument. The question rather is—"Shere Ali, having re-conquered the Kingdom of Afghanistan, and the Government of India having recognised his rival as ruler of Cabul and Candahar, or the major portion of it, what, in this very awkward dilemma did that Government do?" Grant their *protégé* Azim Khan, and his nephew, the asylum they craved, and eat their leek with that humility which, as the only policy the advocates of "masterly inactivity" could honestly recommend, would have been most

becoming. No! It did nothing so consistent; but, again in so great a hurry was this Government to abandon its avowed policy of non-interference in the politics of Central-Asia, that, without waiting for any overtures from the reinstated monarch, or any instigations from the "war party," or any one else, it offered to give him £120,000, and several thousand stand of arms. In other words, that Government which had turned a deaf ear to the almost unanimous warnings of the press of India, and which had treated with contempt the counsel and advice of those who were contemptuously styled Russia-phobists,—that Government which had steadily, if not obstinately, refused to give Shere Ali an obolus to enable him to retain his throne, and was thus indirectly responsible for the bloodshed which followed,—turned its back upon itself, and with a liberality, which, looking to the quarter whence it came, was as lavish as it was unexpected, came down suddenly with a sum infinitely larger than at an earlier stage of the proceedings would have been necessary to maintain order and good government in Afghanistan. Every argument that could possibly be used against granting assistance to Shere Ali in the commencement of the civil war which has raged in Afghanistan for the past two years, has double, aye, ten-fold force when applied to the circumstances of the situation as we now find it. There can be no doubt, whatever, that had we given aid, even to the extent of £20,000 or £30,000 a year, to our faithful ally in the time

of his dire distress, he would *not* have lost his kingdom, and we would have gained in character and reputation, not only with the Afghans, but with our Indian subjects, and especially with those of the Mohammadan religion. But what will they, what can they, what do they say now ?

One and all will say, must say, that that assistance which Shere Ali, bowed down with the weight of his misfortunes, and an humble suppliant at the feet of Her Majesty's Viceroy, could not obtain by appeals to the magnanimity, the generosity, and the honour of the mighty British Government, the same Shere Ali flushed with conquest and in the full supremacy of his sovereignty has extorted from its fears. And the most unfortunate part of this unhappy affair is, that by no process of reasoning will it be possible to convince the Asiatic mind of the truth of any other conclusion, however plausible the arguments used in support of it may be. Indeed, from any point of view, be it Oriental or European, it seems to me difficult, if not impossible, to deduce a happy conclusion from any arguments in favour of the line of policy adopted by the Government of India which may be founded upon its own official acts. It would be strange then if Asiatics who, however we may desire to blind ourselves to the fact, must yield the neck but unwillingly under our yoke, should trouble themselves to turn off the straight road to seek for crooked arguments to defend a blundering policy. They will not do so ; but, on the contrary,

every native in India who is accustomed to think on political subjects, and especially the natives of the North-west Provinces, the Punjab, Sindh, and of all those parts of India, the inhabitants of which feel that the affairs of Afghanistan and Central Asia have a special and a personal interest for them, will take the direct line of argument, and that line can lead them to no other conclusion than that at which I have above arrived. I would go further and state—and since I conscientiously believe it I feel that I am justified in stating it—that there is not a Mohammadan from the borders of Persia to Cape Comorin who will not, in his heart of hearts, secretly rejoice at the dishonour with which the British nation has been covered, and exult over the humiliating spectacle presented to the World by the would-be paramount Christian Government being compelled through base fear to purchase immunity from the consequences of its own acts by the payment of gold!

In the estimation of the Mohammadans, the Crescent has triumphed over the Cross. To them, the *denouement* of these negociations is a second Afghan war, bloodless in its issue it is true; still it cannot be yet said to be barren of results. The first Afghan war bore fruit, bitter fruit, eighteen or twenty years after it took place, and time alone can tell how many years brooding over the present proceedings of the Government of India it will take the Asiatic to act upon the conclusions he has already

formed regarding the sense of our own weakness we have clearly exhibited.

I have seen it stated that all such ideas are imaginary, or put forward in support of the particular crotchets or theories of Russo-maniacs — that the natives of India do not *think*, and have no idea of a policy at all. Nay more, that it is a common practice with Europeans to put ideas into the mouths of natives, and from them argue out the conclusions they wish the English public to believe. This may be in part or even wholly true of the Anglo-Bengali Baboo class, who edit most of the native journals of Bengal, whose creed is to preserve the perpetual settlement and to pay as little in taxes as they can. But it is the very reverse of true as regards politicians of the purely Oriental school, who form a very large and influential class of our subjects in India, and who not only think a very great deal on these subjects, but who discuss them very freely *in private*. Further, so far from these gentlemen submitting themselves to be indoctrinated with the views of Europeans upon Asiatic or Indian politics, their *real* sentiments are seldom or never expressed in the presence of a European. Herein lies one of the main difficulties of governing India with that certainty regarding the security of our position which can only flow from, or rather grow out of the assurance that we possess an accurate knowledge of the opinions of our native subjects.

No wise man in the possession of his sound senses would under-estimate the importance to a govern-

ment such as that of Great Britain in India, having a good knowledge of the feelings of its native subjects upon political matters. Under the most favourable circumstances, and with the ablest and best management, this must at all times be extremely difficult to obtain; but with that infatuation, if not that blind ignorance which seems to rule much of our proceedings in the Government of this great Empire, we have adopted a system of education which, as tending to isolate the educated classes from the great body of the people, effectually shuts the governing classes out from all communion of thoughts and sympathies with the native mind, and renders a difficulty an impossibility. I unhesitatingly assert that we have receded immeasurably within the last quarter of a century in native public opinion in consequence of the absence of sympathy gradually becoming more and more apparent in our system as this system becomes more and more developed. It is needless to enlarge upon this subject, however, to English readers, as the Marquis of Salisbury seems to be the only Statesman who has had sagacity sufficient to discern the weak points in our modern system of governing our Asiatic subjects. Let us return rather to the fortunes of Shere Ali.

He has received or is to receive £120,000 out of the taxes paid by our Indian subjects, and for what? The question has been asked and answered in Parliament. It has been acknowledged that the Ameer is to receive this large sum of money, and

“for nothing.” It is called a “present,” not a “subsidy;” and apparently some credit is taken for the distinction. I desire to speak with much respect of His Grace the Duke of Argyll, not because he is Secretary of State for India, though that might not be improper in one who feels so deep and sincere an interest in the welfare of the people in the Government of whom he holds so exalted a position, as I do; but for reasons which I shall allude to further on in this paper. I cannot however but say that it is a source of regret to me that he did not repudiate this act of the Indian Government altogether, leaving the entire responsibility of it upon the shoulders of those with whom it emanated. It is called, as I said, a “present.” Well, what is a “present”; that is to say what is a “present” in the East? A present in the East is either an interchange of complimentary gifts, generally of equal value between kings, or persons of equal rank; similar gifts between Princes not of equal rank, always requiring a return; gifts from subordinate Princes to the King paramount, or tribute (*nal-bundi*); gifts from subjects to kings, or persons of inferior rank to persons of high degree as an acknowledgment of superiority (*nuzzur*); gifts given for some declared object or valuable consideration; and gifts bestowed for no ostensible purpose, but which are perhaps more common and better understood than any other gifts in the East—bribes (*rishwat*). Now had this “present” to Shere Ali been a “subsidy,” which His Grace

the Duke of Argyll has taken some pains to assure the House of Lords that it is not, and had it been given for any declared and well defined object we would have been relieved from the very awkward position in which we are placed in native public opinion, by representing it to be simply a "present." But as a "present" this payment is, and *must* be in the eyes of our native subjects, a gift of the last mentioned description—a Bribe. It is idle, nay worse, it is positively stupid to tell the natives of India that this "present" is simply a little friendly help to the representative of a royal and unfortunate family to whom the British Government are under the deepest obligations for their steadfast and faithful adherence during the Persian war, and again when our own power in India trembled in the balance and a breach of faith on their part would have been *fatal* to us. A subsidy, for example, in return for an engagement on the part of the Ameer to protect our frontier from raids on the part of the hill tribes, would have been a perfectly intelligible if not a sound policy. But there is not a native of North-Western India who, when he hears that this "present" is a "token of friendship," will not repeat *Dost ún báshad kih dust-i dost gírad dur parishán hál o dur mándigí.**

* "A true friend is he who grasps the hand of his friend in the time of his trouble and distress."—The poet *Sadi*. The phrase is the counterpart of our proverb—"a friend in need is a friend indeed."

Of this I am certain, the natives of India are not at all so simple as many people imagine, and although the above explanation may do very well for the Houses of Lords and Commons, it will do very ill for the natives of India, who have a perfectly vivid recollection and appreciation of the obligations the British Government are under to the Ruler of Afghanistan for not breaking faith with us during the Mutiny, at a time when truly it was on the cards for him to play the rôle of Ahmad Shah Doorâni, if not of Nadir Shah of infamous memory. It would be difficult for me to find expressions through which to convey an accurate conception of the extent to which the Government of India or of Great Britain are indebted to the Government of Afghanistan for its conduct during the rebellion of 1857-58; the English language does not contain words which would adequately express the personal obligations of the late Governor-General of India, then Lieut.-Governor of the Punjab, to this Government. Had the Afghans even threatened our frontier with a considerable force *then*, the Punjab would have been up, Delhi could not have been relieved, and India *must* have been lost.

It is no exaggeration to say that Sir John Lawrence and every European who was at the time in the Punjab owe their lives to the forbearance of the Afghan Government. And the people of India and of Afghanistan know this somewhat better than the people of England. To endeavour therefore to

persuade *them* that a Government which had coldly declined to give Shere Ali the smallest assistance in the hour of his distress; that a Government which had not only without emotion seen him driven from his kingdom, but indecently hastened to acknowledge his rival as King in his stead; that a Government which had remained inactive during a period of two years of bloodshed, could suddenly become imbued with any strong feelings of anxiety for the peace and good government of the country, or of attachment for its ruler, is a work of supererogation, which if attempted is more likely to render us contemptible than anything else. In the opinion of the natives of both Afghanistan and of India this “present” is a bribe and nothing else; a “bribe” given for the double purpose of preventing Shere Ali from forming any alliance hostile to us with Russia, and from having his revenge for the shameful treatment he experienced at our hands, by impelling the tribes upon our north-west frontier. In both instances the motive is the same; one unworthy of the character of the British Nation, and derogatory to the position it holds in the East—*Fear!*

Shere Ali, of course, will take our money; he would be a fool if he did not. He may find it his interest moreover to maintain the semblance of friendly relations with us as long as it suits his convenience, especially if he sees a chance of getting any more money; but, that any cordiality can exist on his part towards the English, after what has

occurred, I assert to be more than human nature could permit. Were it even under other circumstances probable, the hospitality which the mistakes of the Indian Government placed it out of their power to refuse to Azim Khan would now render it impossible. Conditions with any ex-king in a similar position are valueless. Was not Shah Shujah in India as a refugee, and was he not placed by the British Government, at the head of a large army, on the throne of Cabul? It not Azim Khan in India; was he not there before as he is now, I assume, living on the bounty of the British Government; did he not return to Cabul, oust Shere Ali, and was he not instantly recognized as king by the Government of India? Does Shere Ali know all this, or does he not; and if so is there anything in the existing situation to justify him in believing that the Lion has changed his skin? No, there is nothing; and it is well for us to know it, in order that we may not expect more from Shere Ali than that which he has received.

Now, by the foregoing remarks I do not mean to imply that any action on the part of the Government of India could have prevented the outbreak of civil war in Afghanistan after the death of Dost Mohammed. Still if the maintenance of a strong Government in Afghanistan is a portion of the policy of the *Home* Government, and peace beyond our North-west frontier was of any importance to the condition of India, surely it was the business of

the *Indian* Government to make *some* effort to accomplish these ends before it was driven to it by absolute fear. Instead of trumpeting to the world that it intended to abandon Shere Ali to his fate, and thereby strengthening his enemies, had he been furnished with arms and money two years ago, let it be even as a loan if any prefer it, things would most probably never have come to the lamentable pass they did in Afghanistan, for Shere Ali, backed by our moral support and our money, would no doubt very soon have suppressed the rebellion. Some said he was not made of the stuff for a Ruler of the Afghans ; but later events altogether disprove this assertion, and were it otherwise, the Government of India, at least, showed that it was not prepared to give him a fair trial, and it never did so. Others, admitting the reason of this policy, said that if it failed, having once taken up the cause of Shere Ali, we would have been compelled to support him through the vicissitudes of his fortunes, which to a moral certainty would have involved us in military operations. I am unable to see any thing in our position in India, which would necessitate our sending a military force into Afghanistan in support of a friendly sovereign, *because* we had lent him either money or arms, if this aid did not enable him to maintain his position. The treaty of the British Government of 1809 did not stipulate for it : but simply that “ the British Government should hold themselves in readiness to afford the necessary expenses for the

above-mentioned service (repelling the French and Persians from entering or passing through the King of Cabool's dominions) to the extent of their ability." And admitting that such would not have been the result of this policy, I am certain we would stand infinitely higher in the estimation, not only of the Afghans, but of the Princes of India to-day, had we shown, that instead of abandoning a friendly monarch the moment he got into trouble, we had done everything short of taking up arms in his cause, to enable him to retain the throne, to which we recognized he alone had the right.

Furthermore, had such supposed necessity, from the prestige point of view, existed, what more easy or more honest than to have proclaimed *beforehand*, that if with such signal advantages as our support would have given our ally, he was unable to hold his own, we would *not* take up arms in his cause; but would consider his defeat under such circumstances either as good proof that his cause was not popular with the great majority of his subjects, or that he was unfit to rule. Then, indeed, could it have been said that Shere Ali had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. But there *never* were, at any stage of these proceedings, any grounds whatever for assuming that such a policy would have failed. The Afghans are as mercenary as any of the races of Central Asia, and would have flocked in thousands to the standard of the chief who could pay them the best. If Shere Ali, a fu-

gitive, and driven to the ends of his kingdom, with the aid of Persian influence and Russian gold, or without the aid of either, as the case may be, could collect a fresh army, return with it and retake his kingdom, how can it be said with any show of probability, that when seated on his throne, and in possession of the reins of Government, he would have been unable, with British influence and India's gold, to hold his own against any number of rebel chiefs in the field? These arguments in my opinion are utterly worthless; and were it otherwise, how will those who a year ago advanced them to prop up the "masterly inactivity" theory, defend their position now?

The Government of India, it is plain, determined from the commencement to shape its course in accordance with what was believed to be the English *idea*, irrespective of consequences; to do nothing that would give even the semblance of a ground on which to raise the shadow of another Afghanistan campaign; and, above all things, to *spend no money*. The subsidy, therefore, which was allowed to Dost Mohammed during the Persian war, and for some time subsequently, and which proved to be a well laid out expenditure then, and which, had it been continued to Shere Ali, would most probably have materially aided him in maintaining his position, was withdrawn, and Her Majesty's Viceroy having repeatedly refused assistance has been ignominiously *compelled* to eat his own refusal and to grant whatever has been asked. Further, England's

honour was allowed to be trailed in the dirt by an insignificant frontier tribe, the Bazooties, who not only defeated our arms, but insulted our dead without the exaction of any retribution, an act the first fruits of which we have eaten in the campaign which has just been closed in the Hazara country, by the Hill tribes firing on our retiring troops, as if to show their appreciation of the enemy who had undertaken to chastise them.

Turning to British India again, I find nothing whatever to relieve the dark picture I have drawn of the condition of things in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Where "inactivity" has been the rule, as in Foreign affairs, there have of course been few acts of the Government to comment upon, and it remained but to point to the results that had occurred, and to predict those that might be expected to follow from the policy adopted, and how matters would have stood had a different line of conduct been pursued. To pass in review the Home policy of the Government of India since the mutiny and rebellion of 1857-58, however, would be quite beyond the scope of this paper, and I must content myself with noticing, in addition to what I have already said, a few alone of those acts which have a special bearing on our position in India taken in connection with the approach of a first-class European Power towards our North-west frontiers.

There can be no doubt whatever that a sense of wide-spread anxiety has been created amongst our

native Indian subjects of all classes by the rapid advance of Russia towards Afghanistan; and it is equally certain that this sense has been raised to a feeling of alarm, if not of absolute fear, by the Government having proclaimed with trumpet tongues that the policy it had adopted, and that which it meant to follow, was one of "masterly inactivity." The articles which have appeared in the native newspapers from one end of the Continent to the other prove the truth of this assertion. The supposition, grounded upon what reaches India through the English Press, that England is prepared to accept the Indus as the boundary between British India and Asiatic Russia, has conveyed to the minds of all those natives who are competent to form an opinion on such a subject, an idea of insecurity of property that few Englishmen can comprehend. The power of the "Russ" throughout the East is believed to be prodigious, and the result of the Crimean War, though it proved that Russia single-handed was not a match for England *and* France, did not prove to the satisfaction of the natives of India that Russia single-handed was not *more* than a match for England. Nothing can be more satisfactory, from a different point of view, than the progress the natives of India have made in English education, but it must not be forgotten that their knowledge of the English language places them in a position to read all the criticisms upon the policy of our Government which appear in the

English Press, without their possessing that knowledge of the power and resources of the English nation which is essential to a right understanding of our position, or a proper appreciation of the comments upon questions of policy they may see in the newspapers. It is not an unreasonable conclusion then for them to arrive at when they find their Government itself announcing, or what is the same thing permitting this belief to obtain currency, if not fostering it, that it means to remain perfectly passive in the face of Russian aggression, even up to the Indus, that the power of England is unequal to check the advance of Russia; and that she will not attempt to offer even diplomatic opposition to her progress until the boldness of the enemy compels her to fight for the very existence of her Indian Empire. The people of India have seen a British army advance into Afghanistan at the visionary idea of a Russian invasion a quarter of a century ago; they have seen war declared against Persia because it laid siege to Herat, and "what," they argue, "has happened to the Lion in these days that he is prepared to lie down with the Bear, abandoning all that he has expended so much money and so much blood in fighting for?" They cannot understand it, or if they can understand the position it is only upon one supposition—*viz.* that Russia is too strong for England, and that the latter has no alternative, but to sit down and look on at her progress, until she reaches the end of her career, be that what it may.

True they are still not sufficiently well informed as to the relative merits of the varied opinions expressed upon the point to form very clear or distinct ideas on the subject, and the result is rather bewilderment, and an ill-defined sense of some immediate danger resulting to themselves, than what that danger may be. Still there is an uneasiness and an anxiety on this subject throughout India the nature or extent of which the time adopted for making this "present," and the honours about to be paid to the Ameer whose cause we abandoned, are calculated to increase rather than to allay.

This is how the question will be viewed by the well-affected to our rule; and the influence of Russia not having as yet been directly used in India, by *them* nothing more than very great alarm has been felt. But within ten years after the rebellion of 1857-58 it cannot be supposed that if the majority of our Indian subjects are well affected to our rule, there is not a large proportion of them who are not so; and it is reasonable to imagine that by these the progress of Russia in Central Asia is looked upon with very different feelings. These feelings, as is usual in such cases in India, are smothered until some opportunity occurs to obtain vent for them, and though freely expressed in private they are *never* repeated in English ears. It would be a very false assumption then for any Government of India to assume, because there are no outward and visible signs of disaffection, that the mass of our native subjects are contented with our rule and happy

under it. It is not so. It may be a sufficient answer to give to a Member of Parliament who doubts the satisfaction of the people with our Government, that, *sua si bona morint*, they are happier and more contented under British rule than they are or would be under native rulers. But this fact would avail us nothing if they were called upon to express an opinion on the subject, and as in 1857-58 they voted the wrong way. It would be a fatal mistake to imagine that we can rely on what is foolishly called the *loyalty* of our Indian subjects, and to shape the measures of our home policy according to the views of English politicians. We cannot too carefully guard against being led by a too strong sense of our security into moulding and modelling the mass into the shape we wish it to take, irrespective altogether of the mass itself, its constitution and temperament, and whether or not they fit it readily to assume the beautiful form we are bent upon giving it. Yet it appears to me that this has been very much what we have been attempting to do. We have been conferring very great benefits upon the country and the people in the shape of railways and electric telegraphs it is true, and all this is good. We have been doing something for education too, and this would be better were the education given of the right sort; but in other respects we have been moving somewhat too fast. The revenues of the country from the ordinary sources have not been equal to the strain, and

we have been obliged to find extraordinary ones. We have been introducing the people to direct taxation, and they don't like it. The income tax was considered *terribly oppressive by the natives*, yet had it not been for the determined resistance of Mr. Massey, this tax would have been re-imposed in 1868 ; and a telegram has reached England while these sheets are passing through the press that it has been re-imposed this year. This is one of the instances only of that false sense in the security of our position to which I allude. Municipal commissions all over India appointed with utter disregard to the state of civilization of the people, are doing a great deal of harm. For education the people are prepared to pay something extra, willingly ; but they do not want air, light, or sanitation, if they have to pay for these luxuries out of their own pockets. The Government they think should provide for these requirements if they think them necessary. The indecent haste of the late legislation regarding the land tenure in Oude, and in the Punjab, has had a terribly bad effect. The influential landowners both in Oude and the Punjab, whatever opinions they may have publicly expressed, are *not* satisfied or contented. I assert this with the *utmost* confidence. The new Stamp act is considered oppressive ; and legislation, generally, is considerably in advance of the requirements of the country or the people. There is altogether too much of it. We are positively trying experiments in legislation upon the 'vile bodies' of the natives, which is hardly fair to them, and they don't like it.

Again, we are perpetually making efforts to push our laws and regulations, our civilization as it is called, upon wild tribes who don't want it, and while all this costs money, Sir Bartle Frere's able minutes on the Sindh and Peshawar Railways, works which are absolutely necessary for the safety of the Empire, met with the strongest and most determined opposition. Altogether little has been done since 1857-58 to reinstate our Government in the *affections* of the natives—I mean to make it more palatable to them—while much has been done, I fear, though no doubt with the best intentions, that will have a contrary effect.

Looking to our relations with the native Princes, moreover, so far from these being improved, there would still seem to be the same feeling of uncertainty prevailing amongst these Princes regarding their position and independence as before. The recognition of the heir of the Raja of Mysore was a wise move; but that was a move made wholly by the Home Government in *opposition* to the views of the Indian Government. The *publication* of the correspondence regarding the comparative merits of British and Native rule, was enough to turn every native Prince in India into an open enemy of the British Government, and to engender the most bitter feelings of hatred and animosity towards us amongst a very large body of our subjects. I was perfectly aghast when I saw these papers published, and furnished to every newspaper in India to com-

ment upon. (*Vide* especially the evidence of Sir R. Temple and Col. Daly, Resident at Gwalior.)

The deposition of the Nawab of Tonk *without any commission of inquiry*, has created great alarm in the minds of the native Princes. I do not say it was not a just act ; still less that it was not a right one ; but I doubt our position in India being sufficiently strong to render it *politic* in us to try native Princes supposed to be independent by the same moral code as we recognize ourselves. Again, although the circumstances are not quite the same, the Government that could not only acknowledge the Imam of Muscat, who ascended the throne after cruelly and brutally murdering his own father in cold blood, but aid him in disposing of the claims of his uncle, could hardly be supposed to feel any strong moral obligation to visit its displeasure on a tributary Prince who had simply encouraged an attack on a troublesome *Takoore*, in which he was killed. The moral result therefore looked for is lost, while the act of despotism survives to create fresh alarms in the minds of those Princes who feel that they sit on their *musnads* by sufferance. The reopening of the case of the Raja of Khupoortala's father's will after a lapse of thirteen years, and the setting aside of a decision of Lord Canning given in open durbar, without the orders of the Home Government, raised a feeling of such extreme consternation in the minds of all the chiefs of the Punjab and Oude, that it would be impossible to magnify it.

It would almost seem as if Sir John Lawrence conceived that he had a special mission from the Crown to uproot the very foundations of the new Empire, laid by the great and good Lord Canning, with such determination did his Government try to run counter to his policy. But in this instance Great Britain was fortunate in having a statesman at the head of the India Office who could sacrifice his personal views to the interests of the State, and who preferred to uphold the honour of his Queen and the integrity of her Viceroy's solemn engagements with a distinguished and faithful vassal of the Crown, to obstinately adhering to a policy which Her Majesty's Government had ten years previously abandoned as unwise and untenable. The Duke of Argyll decided that the orders of Earl Canning were inviolable, and must stand; and this decision was most honourable to the Duke of Argyll. His Grace stands in the peculiar position of being the sole English statesman who had publicly expressed his views on the Indian administrations of Lords Dalhousie and Canning.* These were strongly in favour of Lord Dalhousie's policy as opposed to that of Lord Canning, and a weaker man and a statesman of less high principled integrity and honesty, having the whole weight of the Governor-General of India in council on his side, might have

* His remarks on this subject appeared first in the Edinburgh Review, and were afterwards published in a separate form, with his own signature.

hesitated before he consented to interpose his authority to stop the dismemberment of an ancient principality and the weakening of that *one* Native Chief who took the field in person and fought at the head of his troops in our defence in 1857.

Not so the Duke of Argyll, he at once made up his mind to sacrifice his own opinions rather than break the pledged faith of the British Government, and he has his reward. He has his reward, not only in the consciousness that he has honestly and faithfully discharged the trust reposed in him by the Crown; but in the assurance that he has earned for himself in India a high reputation as an upright and just judge, and that he has assisted in regaining in some degree that confidence of the Native Princes of Upper India in the integrity and good faith of the British Government, which I deeply regret to say I think well nigh lost. I confidently affirm that there is not a native prince from Rajputanah to Peshawar, who will not feel more secure in his possessions after having heard of this decision than he did before. I have dwelt a little longer on this special point than to many of my readers may have appeared necessary, because the case, though not of great political consequence, *per se*, is, in the principle it involves, of the essence of our very existence in India; and has so material a bearing upon that resettlement of our relations with the native princes, which after the rebellion of 1857-58, was concluded by Earl Canning, that its importance cannot be over-estimated.

Holding this opinion, therefore, there is all the more reason that I should feel surprised at the Government of India having gone out of its way to adopt a course so pregnant with danger to our relations with the native Princes without any communication with the Secretary of State. In my humble judgment, that a good understanding should exist between our Indian Foreign Office and the kings, princes, and chiefs holding subordinate or tributary relations with our Government, is of more importance now than ever it was before during the present century. But so totally at variance are the views which have guided the actions of the Government of India in the administration of its foreign affairs with those which I venture to entertain on this subject, so self-satisfied has the late Viceroy apparently been that the Government of India in *all* its departments has, in the short space of ten years, or since 1858, become a mere affair of mechanical routine, that he has thought fit to select a Secretary for Foreign Affairs from amongst the Judges of the High Court of Bengal.*

* I desire to make no reflection upon the individual who might possibly make as good a Secretary in the Home, Judicial, or Educational Department, as any one else; but the appointment by the late Viceroy, on the eve of his departure, of a public servant to the office of Foreign Secretary who had never served out of Bengal proper, seems to me evidence not only of some want of regard for the interests of the State, but of a considerable want of consideration for the position of his successor. The whole of the foreign policy of the late Government of India, has been, to me, an enigma and a puzzle.

All that I have advanced, however, and many other conditions of things in India, make me think that the present time is one in which the utmost caution, as well as the utmost vigour, is required in the management of our affairs in India, if a time is ever expected to come when we may have to call upon the native Princes, as well as our native subjects, to aid us in a struggle for empire with a European enemy, or even a strong combination of native powers under the instigation of a European Government.

Finally, as regards our Central-Asian policy, mischief has been done that it is too late to rectify now ; but things it is to be hoped have not proceeded so far as to be irretrievably lost. A new Viceroy has proceeded to India, and the opportunity should be seized upon to abandon and publicly disavow the old policy. I have already indicated generally what our new foreign policy in my humble judgment ought to be, viz., the exertion of our utmost endeavours to aid in the maintenance of a strong Government in Afghanistan. It will, no doubt, be very difficult after what has taken place, to persuade any Ruler of Afghanistan of the sincerity of our friendly relations, *et dona ferentes*. It may even be found to be impossible ; nevertheless let us try honestly to do so, and, having pledged our faith anew, in the name of God, let us not break it. The Sindh and Peshawar Railways should be pressed on with vigour. Our relations with Persia should be strengthened as much as possible ; and it appears to me that the time

has come for Her Majesty's Government to invite Russia to show her colours, or in other words to declare her Eastern policy.* And here, it appears to me, is the place to say a final word upon this subject.

Hitherto I have been in great part battling with the opinions of others—fighting as it were with shadows. This has been necessary, because these shadows are the blinds which have been placed before the eyes of the public, and prevented them from seeing a very simple question in its true light. I am now going to dispel these vapours, and to show that if this Eastern Question is, from a Russian point of view, one of great delicacy, it is nevertheless one of very great simplicity. The Oriental policy of Russia at home, so to speak, has long been an open book, which those who run may read. It has been to establish, under the guise of a protectorate, a domination in the Turkish Empire and the Kingdom of Greece, and all those countries now subject to or protected by the Porte and the Court of Athens. To attain this end Russia has been working very steadily for the last half century, but not openly. The antagonism of race, character and creed existing between the Semitic and Aryan elements composing the populations of those extensive regions has been the sub-irritant, ever ready to the hand of every Russian minister when occasion seemed favourable for ad-

* Since the above was written, the Secretary of State has announced that negotiations have been opened with the Government of St. Petersburg on the Central-Asian Question.

vancing the end to be attained. To notice and review the instances in which a long series of political intrigues on the part of Russia, relieved by a variety of episodes more or less dangerous to the tranquillity and peace of those countries if not of Europe, has culminated in a check-mate, would fill a very large volume. Suffice it to say that no matter what changes have taken place in the *personnel* of the Russian Government, no number of defeats have affected the persistence with which the Court of St. Petersburg has secretly but steadily pursued the grand object of its *politique*. The wave recedes but to advance at periodic intervals with almost regulated action. That this is the *domination*, as I have said, of the countries alluded to, and not their *protection*, I do not doubt; but that grand object is primary only in so far as it is the corner-stone in the edifice, the Russian *idée* has erected as the ultimate and still grander aim of its ambition—the supremacy of Russia in Europe!

Some people say “Russia is bankrupt; her army is disorganized, and in the most modern acceptation of the term, unarmed; her navy has been annihilated; in short Russia has neither men, ships, or money. No one has consequently anything to fear from Russia.” All this I grant, in the present; Russia herself acknowledged it a few months ago, by the attitude she instructed her minister to take up at the late Turko-Grecian Conference at Paris, and the subsequent letter of the Emperor of Russia to the King of Greece. But, nevertheless, the

money markets of Europe are a far better test of the financial position of a country than you or I, kind reader ; and that Russia has borrowed £35,000,000 within the last few years without any difficulty whatever ; that a Commission is at this moment sitting for the purpose of considering Army reform ; and that Russia has laid down six ironclads within the last six months, are facts worth all the essays and reviews we may write on the Eastern question.

The situation as it appears to me is this. As long as the system of Government in Russia was framed upon a semi-Asiatic model, or, if some prefer it, a semi-barbaric model, Europe had little to fear from her. A country so ruled can have little internal strength ; and without internal strength no country can be aggressively very dangerous to powerful neighbours. But we have changed all that. Russia has been born again. She is an infant. She is yet barely ten years old. The present it is our business to watch ; but it is the future of Russia upon which the cautious statesman has to exert his powers of thought. She has emancipated her serfs ; she is laying down a net-work of railways, which when completed will be the grandest system of iron roads in the world. She is perfecting this system moreover by means of foreign capital, £22,000,000 having been contributed by England, and £13,000,000 by the rest of the Continent of Europe. When next Russia tries to break down the balance of power, the rest of Europe will have a very different opponent to deal with from that which

met England and France in 1855-56. Russia will then be nearer its manhood. That Russia will make the attempt, no sane man can doubt. For let us clear away the cobwebs and examine the question, *au fond*, as the French say. Russia, it is supposed, attaches very great importance to her conquests in Central Asia, and stupid writers have enlarged upon this topic as if they believed the greatness of the Russian Empire was as closely linked with her supremacy in those wild regions, as the greatness of England is with her supremacy in India. Central Asia is but the red rag held out by the skilful Russian *matador* to infuriated and stupified John Bull. As for the invasion of India, I repeat for the twentieth time, it is not a question to which Russia has given the smallest consideration just yet. What *we* call the "Central-Asian Question," has comparatively little importance in her eyes. I would go further and say that it has *primarily* no importance at all in the grand Muscovite politique, beyond that *secondary* importance with which, as being one of the corner-stones in the so-called "Eastern question," it is invested. Russia may have, or rather Russia has an almost unlimited extent of frontier to protect; but Russia, as Napoleon the First and France discovered to their cost, was unassailable by land sixty years ago, and the completion of her railway system will certainly not render her more vulnerable now. She has in reality not much to fear from the *armies* of Europe, and unless for the purposes of aggression, has little occasion for a grand army of

her own. It is our fleets alone she has to dread ; it is a fleet of her own alone she has to desire. To be a great maritime power is the *sine qua non* of her greatness ; it is the dream of her ambition, and to be a great maritime power she will strive to the last. Ice-bound in the north, the Bosphorus offers the sole outlet for her egress to Western seas, and here is to be found the pivot point upon which the *whole* of the foreign policy of Russia turns. Russia's hopes and Russia's fears are centered in maritime power. It is the key of her secret aims. Russia *must* always play an important role in the political affairs of Europe ; but her ambition transcends this high position, and the accomplishment of her darling object, for which she will struggle to the end of time, with all her might and main, is dependent in great part upon her maritime strength. England seems to have foreseen this when after the close of the Crimean war she desired the destruction of Russia's entire fleet ; but France, wisely on her part, preferring to maintain a counterpoise to that power now claiming " to rule the waves," and seeing no material danger to her own interests, except in the development of a powerful rival in the " French lake," was in favour of a half measure, and carried her point. Russia, confronted by the two greatest maritime powers in the world, succumbed ; but she has profited by her experience, and this brings us to a point whence we may hope to get at the kernel of the Central-Asian difficulty.

I have said that Russia has little to dread from the large armies of her neighbours, and those of the other great powers of Europe; and if so, it is obvious that there are but two nations in the world who are sufficiently powerful at sea to cause her serious anxiety. Either, the other permitting, can give Russia much trouble. United they can check-mate her at any moment, or at any, or all stages of her political career. The destruction, or the neutralization then of the Anglo-French Alliance is one of the base points of Russia's present position. Napoleon III. has once or twice shown some signs of vacillation on questions affecting Russia, especially immediately after the Crimean war; but it must be admitted that on the whole the Emperor of the French has been steady and faithful to his alliance with England, and whilst the personal attacks upon him, which have from time to time appeared in the English press have reflected some discredit upon England, the manner in which Louis Napoleon has often sacrificed his national popularity for the preservation of this alliance has placed England under many obligations to him. Russia possibly, therefore, has little ground on which to anticipate being able to effect a breach in this alliance by direct means. She *hopes*, no doubt, much from the present aspect of the political horizon in Europe; and the aggrandisement of Prussia it may be granted is favourable to the views of those who wish for a reconstruction of the existing basis of power in Europe. She may count something too

upon the probabilities of an estrangement arising out of England's certain refusal to aid France should she be hard pressed to maintain her position on the Rhine, or from an *imbróglío* with Belgium. But these are chances, and concern France only.

Turning to England, as regards European Politics, the prospect for Russia is less hopeful. If Russia is inaccessible to land attacks, England, at home, is infinitely more so, and, as long as she remains mistress of the seas, positively invulnerable. From her growing disinclination to fight, she has certainly lost caste amongst the nations of Europe, and in many respects from this point of view, however unwilling she may be to admit it, the French alliance has been of considerable advantage to her. Still so favourably is she situated that she is comparatively independent of this or any other alliance. Certainly she would survive the loss of it; and it may be a question whether the French alliance was not, in the beginning, a mistake, and whether a Russian alliance would not have been more in the true interests of Great Britain. Be that as it may, the French alliance exists, and judging from the happy influences of our commercial relations the *entente cordiale* between the English and French people is more likely to be improved than impaired by time. Under all circumstances, however, England *at home* is, as I said, invulnerable; and may, if she chooses, look on at all the other nations of Europe engaging in war with perfect indifference as regards her own safety. It is more

than probable that she will do so, moreover, should the great continental armies which are now menacing the peace of Europe come to blows. Russia is quite as well aware of this fact as England is herself, and has long since discounted it. But if so, she is equally well aware that in matters involving interests of serious moment in connection with the Turkish Empire, Greece, the Mediterranean, Egypt, and the direct route to India, England is as a stag at bay and *must* fight, or, as a first-class power, cease to exist. Achilles-like, there is but one point in the whole body-corporate of the mighty empire of Great Britain, in which England can be mortally wounded, and that is India.* She governs there an empire as large as France, Austria, Spain, Italy, and Germany put together. The maintenance of this empire is a mystery, a marvel which is inexplicable, for it appears to contain within it so many elements of combustion that a conflagration may at any moment burst into flames when least expected.

Russia knows all this too, better than Great Britain, for John Bull is constitutionally a sleepy animal and likes to trust to the chapter of accidents for results, or, if it be preferred, likes to trust in Providence. Whilst the Bull, then, has been trusting and sleeping, the Bear, having disposed of his Cau-

* I exclude the continent of America from consideration here. Canada is not in my humble judgment necessary to the greatness of England: naturally it ought to be, and one day no doubt it will be part of the Great Republic.

casian enemies in a manner peculiarly Muscovite, has been creeping up, very steadily, but still very rapidly, towards his domains, until at last he has come so unpleasantly near, that the Bull has begun to open his eyes, to stretch himself, and to ask "what does the animal mean; do you really think he intends to charge?" The answer is a very simple one. The Bear, as already oft-repeated in this review, has no such openly hostile intention. Russia means to pursue, in regard to India, precisely the same line of conduct as she has pursued, for the last fifty years, in Europe, in regard to Turkey and Greece. It is quite unnecessary to dilate upon that policy here, or to enter into detailed explanations as to how it will be carried out in the East. With the hundreds of independent kingdoms, states, and principalities within and upon the confines of British India, it must be obvious that Russia will find ready to her hand means in Asia ten-fold more suitable for her purposes than any she can find in Europe, where, moreover, her proceedings are vigilantly watched by the astute ambassadors of her powerful European neighbours. She will wait her opportunity, and when it comes she will strike; but not with the vain hope of wresting India from England, but of paralysing her left arm, and rendering it impossible for her to send a soldier to take part in any European war.

Russia saw, the whole of Europe saw, that to make up the complement of her small Crimean army, England was obliged to lower the strength of her

European forces in India to so dangerous a point that her native army rose in rebellion, and that she was reduced to extremities to reinforce it to a strength that enabled her to regain that portion of her Indian possessions which she had lost. Russia knows full well that with internal disturbances in India, alarm and distrust pervading the minds of the native Princes, and a large European Army threatening her Indian frontiers, England's military power in Europe would be utterly annihilated. Her base of operations in India as regards army reserves, and recruits, and much of the material of war is even now more distant than that of Russia, and will be infinitely more distant, as soon as the Russian railway system is completed—and in this respect England will *then* be in a worse position in Asia than Russia. It is apparent then that if Russia cannot by direct means impair the integrity of the Anglo-French alliance she may thus render it impossible for France or any other European power to look to England for any assistance on land, and it is quite possible to conceive a state of things in India, arising out of the assembly of a powerful European Army on our Indian frontiers, which would place it within the power of Russia to make it the interest of England to remain neutral as a maritime power also, when at some future time she makes her attempt to burst the chains imposed upon her by the maintenance of the existing balance of power.

This is Russia's trump card, and those who talk

of Russia advancing towards our Indian frontier with the sole object of wresting India from our grasp, have not carefully studied the game.

The day will probably come when Russia and England will be compelled to measure their strength on the plains of India ; but if Russia is wise, and it appears to me that she is wise, she will see that it is quite as much her interest as it is the interest of England, that that day should be postponed to as distant a date as possible. She will use India as a lever, however, to effect her objects in Europe, and hence it is that it would suit her purposes to have her confines in the East conterminous with ours as many *wise* English politicians seem to wish. To prevent this is however clearly our soundest policy, and it is for this reason that I think the Government of India committed so serious an error in not coming to the aid of the Ruler of Afghanistan at an earlier period. Every opportunity of doing so was afforded to them then, without giving any grounds of offence to Russia, or without making any display of weakness either to her or our Indian subjects. It is not only discourteous but positively a cardinal error in diplomacy to *assume* duplicity or an intention to overreach on the part of a power with whom a State may be in friendly relationship. It is something worse to exhibit to that power any signs of nervousness or fear. But by the mode in which this "Central-Asian difficulty" has been managed and the immediate moment chosen for making this "present" *both* these objects have now been obtained.

Had the "present" been given for services, nominal let it be, to be rendered, England would have had an answer to give should Russia have demanded an explanation on this point, as it appears to me she has a perfect right to do. But as it stands, this present without an object, is a direct menace to Russia, and the fact of its being given at all, is a clear and unmistakeable sign of weakness. It is quite impossible for Russia to put any other construction upon it; and no doubt she and every one else will interpret it to our disadvantage. The happy results then of the course which has been adopted, are, that Russia is perfectly free to follow our example and outbid us for the alliance of the Ruler of Afghanistan, or set up a rival whenever it suits her convenience, and Shere Ali having no treaty obligations, and having received his present for nothing, is equally free to open negotiations with Russia without any breach of faith towards us, and in neither case will we have the smallest right either to demand explanations or to complain of the course adopted. The difference of position between Russia and ourselves, however, is that having commenced to give presents to the Ruler of Afghanistan, we must continue to do so as long as he demands them, unless we are prepared to abandon all the advantages we are supposed to have purchased, while Russia need not pay anything at all until she sees her opportunity, when, having spent nothing, she may then offer a "present" three or four times greater in

amount than ours, and still be a gainer in the game of intrigue. Of the three, the Ruler of Cabul has obtained the best position, because he can now put his alliance up to auction, and knock it down to the highest bidder, a course which in him would be perfectly justifiable.

Possibly our money and the well known antipathy of Russia to the cause of the Crescent, may help us to maintain this alliance and carry us over the difficulties of our position for a considerable time; but if so, it will certainly be the result more of good luck than of good management, or of Afghan reliance upon our good faith, for from the point of view from which I look at the whole question, the proceedings of the Indian Government have been of so blundering a nature as not only to encourage, but positively to court the very disasters we were most anxious to avoid. For, to sum up, we commenced by entering into a treaty (1855) with the Ruler of Afghanistan and his heirs, the provisions of which, looking to the *power* of the one and the *weakness* of the other of the high contracting parties, cannot be considered by any honourable nation otherwise than cowardly; we continued by refusing to aid the successor of that Ruler who in the times of our trouble had acted towards us with singular honesty and good faith, when he was in distress, and by permitting his kingdom to be convulsed with civil war and bloodshed for two years, while we adopted the cause of a usurper; we followed this up by abandoning the ruler of our own

choice the moment misfortune overtook him ; and we concluded by entering upon a system of bribery more Asiatic than European in its character, and altogether at variance with that manliness and straightforwardness which is our especial pride and our boast. Yet it is expected by some that we shall still retain that high character for courage, honour, honesty, and good faith which the British Nation once undoubtedly did bear throughout the entire East. Impossible ! Our *real* strength in India and the East consists in moral, not physical force ; and it is with the loss of *real* strength we have attained the position in which we now find ourselves placed. Physically we are, no doubt, no weaker than we were before ; morally, we have sunk to the level of the Asiatic, nay, even below it.

MADRID, *April 2nd*, 1869.

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