

Confidential.

Copy No. 1

RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA.

OBJECT OF NOTE.—The object of this Note is to place before the Secretary of State for India certain general facts connected with recent encroachments of Russia on the Turkoman country and the northern frontier of Persia; to describe the Nomad tribes inhabiting those regions; to explain briefly the attitude of Russia and England in regard to the Atrek, Merv, and Afghanistan, in combination with a narrative of the movements of Russian expeditions into the Turkoman country since 1874-75. The Note will be limited to the narration of facts which bear directly on the present reported movements of Russian columns in or towards the Turkoman country, and the secret mission of Russian officers in apparent connection therewith.

TURKOMAN TRIBES AND PROCEEDINGS OF RUSSIA AND PERSIA IN REGARD TO THEM, &c.—The regions of the Atrek and Merv were practically a *terra incognita* to the majority of Englishmen some years ago. The landing of a Russian force at Krasnovodsk in 1869, and the subsequent attack on the Western Turkomans in violation of the reputed northern boundaries of Persia, first gave life to a question which had practically lain dormant for half a century. The history of Russian encroachment on the south-east coast of the Caspian Sea is best understood, perhaps, by a simple record of dates.

NOTE.—For fuller details see Herslet's Memorandum, 16th August 1877. Henvey's and Plowden's "Central Asia," 1873-78. Sir Henry Rawlinson's "England and Russia in the East," 1875.

In 1834 Great Britain and Russia entered into an agreement to respect the independence and integrity of Persia.

In 1838 this agreement was confirmed.

In 1842 the Russians, with the avowed object of assisting the Persians against the Turkomans, occupied the island of Ashurada, near Asterabad, to the south of the River Gurgan, and erected buildings on the island.

In 1845 they increased their buildings, when the Persians remonstrated against their doing so.

In 1846 it became evident that the Russians intended to form a military establishment at Ashurada, their object being, it was believed, to entice the Turkomans towards the Russian Government, and to detach them from Persia.

They then attempted to establish themselves in the mainland opposite Ashurada, asking the Persians to allow them to build a hospital there and to surround the building and storehouses with a wall; but the Persians, on being cautioned by the British Minister that such a building would thus be in reality a fortress, withheld their consent.

In 1849 the British Government informed the Russian Government that they thought the time had arrived for restoring Ashurada to the Persians. But it has never been restored to this day.

In 1853 the Russians were engaged for some days in surveying the whole line of coast of the Bay of Ashurada.

In 1854 the Persians were about to repair their fortifications at Enzelee near Resht and at Gez near Asterabad; but the Russians remonstrated, and they consequently deferred doing so, although the British Government urged the Persian Government to put Asterabad and Enzelee in a state of defence. At this time the Russian Chargé d'Affaires at Teheran admitted that Ashurada belonged to Persia.

After the Crimean war Russia increased her naval force in the Caspian, and Mr. Abbott pointed out to Her Majesty's Government how this step could only be regarded in the light of a menace to Central Asia and British India, as the best route into Afghanistan was through Asterabad.

In 1869 the Russians took possession of Kizil-Su, or Krasnovodsk, in Balkan Bay, with the avowed object of opening a route to Khiva and Turkestan in the interests of commerce. The Persians remonstrated and claimed the coast as belonging to them, but the Russian Minister at Teheran asserted that Persia had no territorial rights *on the shore of the Caspian Sea* so far north; and on the 13th December following, an agreement was come to between Russia and Persia that the Atrek should form the boundary between their respective States, but that no Russian forts should be erected on that river.

In 1872 the Russians invaded the Akhal Turkoman country, and captured Kizil-Arvat, Bami, and Boormah; it was reported that they had also taken Karee-Kala (which is claimed by Persia) with the intention of fortifying it.

In 1873 the Russians erected a fort to the north of the Atrek River, near its mouth, called Chikishlar; they also crossed the Atrek and attacked the Yemoot Turkomans; but on the Persians protesting, the Russians said they fully recognized "the Atrek" "as the frontier between Russia and Persia;" a doubt was raised however as to whether the agreement of 1869 had reference to that part of the river which empties itself into the Caspian Sea, or to the river along its whole extent. When the discussion on this latter point first arose, the Russian Asiatic Society issued a new edition of their map of Central Asia, with the colouring altered, so as to show the boundary between Russia and Persia as extending for a distance of about forty or fifty miles up the river Atrek.

In 1874 the Russians annexed a large tract of territory on the south-east coast of the Caspian between Khiva and the Atrek, forming a trans-Caspian military district; and at the same time General Lomakin issued a proclamation claiming

NOTE.—So recently as October 1877 the mission agent at Asterabad reported that the Russians informed the Jafferbai Turkomans inhabiting the districts between the Atrek and Gurgan that their territory belonged to Russia, and that lists of those occupying the tract should be furnished. The Jafferbai replied that their territory was Persian, and they in consequence refused to give the required lists.

jurisdiction over the districts to the south of the Atrek, and lying between that river and the Gurgan, which territory was unquestionably Persian.

But, notwithstanding these proceedings of Russia at Ashurada, Krasnovodsk, Chikishlar, Bayat-Hadji, Karee-Kala, and elsewhere, she assured the British Government, so recently as December 1874, that she considered the agreement entered into with the British Government in 1834 and confirmed in 1838, to maintain the independence and integrity of Persia, to be still binding.

DESCRIPTION OF TURKOMAN TRIBES. —Mr. Ronald Thomson describes the Turkomans,* and especially those located near the Persian frontier, as having, by their atrocities, deservedly acquired for themselves an infamous reputation in these countries. They are not only relentless marauders, but, when their enemies are not of the Sunnee Mahomedan faith, inveterate men stealers and slave dealers, treating their captives, when too old for the market or too young to be anything but an incumbrance, with the greatest brutality.

But, on the other hand, it must be admitted that the counter-forays made by the Persians into the Turkoman country are mostly conducted in the same ruthless spirit, and that, when engaged in actual hostilities, there is little to choose between the two as regards the cruelties perpetrated.

The Turkomans are not devoid of good qualities. Theft from each other is unknown. Chiefs, elders, and tribesmen all live on a footing of perfect equality. Their faith in each other's honesty is so great that, when money is borrowed by one from another, receipts are not given or required, and a man of good repute amongst them would rather lose his money than dispute the amount he had to receive. They are not intolerant fanatics; they are an extremely hardy race; and in the habits and character of the Turkomans generally there are elements which show that they might, in the presence of a powerful and civilized Government, become peaceable neighbours, without their actual subjection being requisite; indeed in the event of their being brought under the Russian rule they are likely to become before long a colony of Cossacks, who would prove themselves formidable and dangerous enemies to any troops against whom they may be properly equipped and led.

The Turkomans as a whole number about 109,000 families, or 545,000 souls. The chief tribes are the Chádur, of 8,000 tents, or 40,000 souls, inhabiting the region between Mangishlak on the Caspian, and Khiva; the Ersari, of 30,000 tents, or 150,000 souls, occupying the left bank of the Oxus from Charjui on to Khiva; the Salor and Sarik, of about 15,000 tents, or 75,000 souls, inhabiting the districts between Merv and Herat; the Tekke, along the line of the "Atok" or skirts of the hills from the Caspian to Merv, numbering 49,000

* Mr. Ronald Thomson's Memorandum of 29th February 1876.

tents, or 245,000 souls; the Yemoots, who number about 30,000 tents, or 150,000 souls, of whom 12,000 families inhabit the Atrek region, and 18,000 families dwell on the left bank of the Oxus, in Khivan territory; the Goklans, who occupy the country of the Gurgan from Asterabad to the district of Boojnord in Khorassan, and number only about 4,000 families, or 20,000 souls, paying tribute to the Persian Government; the Alecees, who average only 3,000 tents, or 15,000 souls, and live on the mountain slopes to the north of Deragez and on lands near the Morghab.

Of all these tribes the Tekke is the most important and warlike. Originally the whole tribe occupied the territory in which the Akhal branch alone is now found, but their numbers having increased to such an extent that there was no larger space for them on the line of the Atok, they divided—25,000 families, or 125,000 souls, remaining there, and 24,000 families, or 120,000 souls, proceeding eastward, forcibly dispossessing the Saryts and Salor tribes of Merv.

The Turkoman tribes do not belong to one nationality,* but are independent of one another, they are under different chiefs, they inhabit different localities, and pursue different avocations of pastoral and agricultural life. The Chadurs and Yemoots were the first to succumb to Russian influence on her first arrival amongst them in 1869, but the Akhal Tekkes held themselves aloof until 1870, when a reconnoitring party from Krasnovodsk attacked and took their most westerly station at Kizil Arvat. From that period forward a desultory warfare has been kept up with them, thereby enabling the Russians to gain a practical knowledge of the line conducting to Merv along the skirts of the Kurendagh range.

ROUTES FROM THE CASPIAN TO MERV.—There are two routes by which a Russian force may advance along the northern slopes of the Kurendagh in the direction of Merv, one being from Krasnovodsk by way of the Balkhan to Kizil Arvat, 130 miles from the Caspian; and the other from Chikishlar by way of Bayat-Hadji and Meshed Misrian to Kizil Arvat, or from Bayat-Hadji to Karee Kala, and thence 36 miles on to Kizil Arvat.

By the Balkhan road, the water supply is dependent on wells. By the other there is an abundant supply derived from the Atrek and one of its affluents (the Simbar) on which Karee Kala is situated. The occupation of this post by Russia would be of great importance to her in advancing on Merv, as it would give her the command, not only of the Atrek valley on to Boojnord and Koochan, and thence through a fertile tract of country 96 miles in length, with a good road to Meshed, but also the command of the passes in the range, leading to the encampments of the Tekke in the Akhal country.

* See Rawlinson's "England and Russia in the East," 1875, for this and many other important facts mentioned in this paper.

NOTE.—Karee-Kala was taken by the Persians in 1869, and has always been considered by Persia (Mr. Tylour Thomson, 31st May 1869) as belonging to her. It has since been occupied by Goklan Turkomans from Khivan territory. The fort is 36 miles from Kizil Arvat. Around Karee-Kala is a large extent of well cultivated land, irrigated by the stream on which the fort stands.

The Akhal Turkomans inhabit the district known by the name of the Atok, a fertile tract of land situated on the northern slopes of the mountain range which divides Khorassan from the Turkoman desert. This tract is from eight to sixteen miles broad, and extends from Kizil Arvat eastwards to Anow and Gavers, a distance of about 150 miles. It is watered by numerous streams descending from the ravines in the mountains, and where the cultivation ceases the desert commences. This desert during the spring months affords a nutritious pasture, and while the season lasts, a portion of each of the tribes descends to the plains to feed their flocks and cattle, while the rest remain in their permanent settlements above. An abundant supply of fuel may be obtained from the desert itself, as in many parts there are extensive tracts of "tak" jungle.

From Kizil Arvat to Bami is 20 miles, and again 8 miles further east is Boormah. Some 70 miles further on towards Merv we come to the districts of Ak Tuppeh, Meheen, Yarejee, and Guk Tuppeh, belonging to branches of the Vekeel tribe, who pay tribute to the Persian Government in the shape of a carpet and a camel presented annually to the Chief of Koochan, in order to secure themselves from attack or reprisals on the part of the Persians.

Finally, about 140 miles or so from Kizil Arvat, is reached Askabat, which is a walled fort, partially ruined and out of repair. Anow is eight miles beyond Askabat. This fort, it may be noted, was pointed out to Mr. Churchill, Consul at Resht, by M. Bacouline, Russian Consul at Astrabad, as the most advanced post of the Persians, all the fortified positions between Anow and Kizil Arvat being occupied by the Tekkés. Eight miles beyond Anow is Gavers, which is the termination eastwards of the Akhal district. Gavers is 35 miles north of Deragez.

The fort of Kizil Arvat forms the salient angle of a vast triangular block of mountains throwing itself out to the north from Astrabad, and joining the main chain again at Deragez. Along the south-western base of this block flow the Gurgan and Atrek rivers, either of which afford an immediate water supply to a force of any strength landing from the Caucasus. Whilst on the one hand an army can march along the banks of the Gurgan to Koochan by a comparatively level and easy road, and thence to Meshed through a broad, well-watered, and well-supplied country; from Kizil Arvat, on the other hand, an advance eastwards into the very heart of the Akhal country, along the fertile tract of the northern slopes of the mountain range, is not only practicable but easy. The whole route is, as stated above, well cultivated, watered by numerous streams descending from the ravines in the mountain range, and amply supplied with fuel from extensive desert jungles.

The road, in fact, offers no obstacle to the passage of guns and waggons, guarded by a force which has only to defend itself against undisciplined horsemen. Numerous passes,* practicable for artillery, lead from this route into Persian territory; and, the Russian Power once in possession of the Akhal country, its further advance on Merv, by Serakhs, in combination with a simultaneous movement from Charjui on the Oxus, will render reasonably certain, at no distant date, the complete subjection of Persia and Afghanistan to Russian influence. The distance from Kizil Arvat to Merv may be thus approximately stated:—

	Miles.
From Kizil Arvat to Achima - -	90
„ Achima to Abiverd - -	220
„ Abiverd to Merv - -	240
	<hr/>
Total - -	550

that is to say, the distance from Kizil Arvat to Merv is about the same as the distance from Quetta to Herat. The distance (regard being had to the favourable character of the routes which traverse it) might probably be covered by a handy well equipped force in eighty days; making due allowance for difficulties of carriage and the opposition of tribes, three or four months' time would amply suffice for the completion of any operation having for its object the occupation of Merv. Charjui, however, is only 150 miles distant from Merv; and, although between Merv and Charjui there is a bad tract of desert, it cannot be reasonably expected that this will prove a serious obstacle to the troops who so successfully overcame all the greater difficulties of the Khivan campaign.

In the event of war with a powerful enemy, the Tekkes of Merv and Akhal would probably assist each other; indeed, according to recent reports, the Akhal Tekkes appear to have formed a plan of operations for themselves in the event of their being attacked by a Russian force, viz., to leave garrisons in Kizil Arvat and Boormah, and, having withdrawn their encampments to Guk Teppeh, or other suitable places further east, to endeavour, by sudden attacks on their exposed points, to cut off the Russian supplies and communications.

Assuming that the Russians may eventually march upon Merv, their first object will be to secure for themselves a strong position in the Akhal country, somewhere near its eastern extremity, at Askabat or Gavers, there to await a further advance by way of Serakhs, or an attack on Merv from Bokhara. From Serakhs to Merv is at present a dry desert, but water might be conveyed by a small canal from the Tejjen river at Serakhs to the immediate vicinity of the Moorghab river at Merv, as was done to Koocheh Kom by the Persian troops under the Hishmet-et-Dowleh, when he advanced upon Merv in 1861, and was defeated by the Turkomans. The soil everywhere around Merv† is most fertile,

* Pass of Allah-ho-Akbar, of Argehvan-shak, of Kishish, and others.

† Mr. Ronald Thomson's Report, 29th February 1876.

and an abundant supply of water is available for irrigation at all seasons from the Moorghab. It is conveyed from the river over the adjacent lands by a large canal, called the Karayab, and by other smaller channels. The tract of land which may thus be brought under cultivation is capable of producing grain sufficient for the support of a much larger population than now exists in that locality.

In the Russian map already alluded to at page 2, the line of the Persian frontier—as if with a view to future events in these regions—is laid down as extending from Hassan Koolce, at the mouth of the Atrek, along the line of that river to the north of Boojnord and south of Deragez, which is *excluded* from the Persian territory, although it is under the direct rule and authority of the Shah. Deragez is, in fact, placed about 12 miles outside of the Persian boundary, whilst Kelati-Nadir, to the north of Meshed, is placed about ten miles within the Persian boundary line. Serakhs, which has a Persian garrison of 500 men and four guns, is also excluded from Persia by 12 miles, and the Persian frontier is then taken south, in a straight line to within about 25 miles of Herat. The frontier of Afghanistan is then carried due east for 80 miles, after which it passes to the north and east until it reaches the Oxus at Khojeh Saleh.

The Russians, consequently, once at Merv, will be in occupation of all the country which, according to their maps, is neither Persian nor Afghan territory, thus bringing them to within some 25 miles of the city of Herat and 20 miles of the town of Maimena.

NOTE.—Captain Napier states that the negotiations between the Tekke Turkomans, and Persia were quite sincere on the part of the tribes, and originated in the fear of the Turkoman of the advances of Russia.

THE AKHALS AND MERV TEKKES TENDER ALLEGIANCE TO PERSIA IN 1876-77. — Nur Verdee, the acknowledged leader of the Akhals, visited Teheran, in October 1876, for the purpose of tendering the allegiance of the tribe to Persia, and suitable terms to this end were agreed to on both sides, viz.,—

- (1.) The construction of a fortress in the Akhal country under the Persian Government.
- (2.) The stationing of an Akhal contingent at Meshed under the Persian Government of Khorassan.
- (3.) Cessation of raids and protection of the tribe by Persia against Russian aggression.

The agreement was duly signed and sealed at Teheran,* but the misbehaviour of the Persian frontier authorities, almost immediately afterwards, in attacking the tribe without reason completely alienated them; Nur Verdee will no longer allow the tribe to acknowledge allegiance to Persia, and the Persian Foreign Minister is now reported † to declare the Shah has no desire to have any further dealings with them, preferring the Russians to the Akhals as neighbours.

* Mr. T aylour Thomson to Earl of Derby, 10th January and 22nd March 1877, and 2nd and 31st October 1877.

† Mr. R. Thomson to Marquis of Salisbury, 21st July 1878.
Foreign Office to India Office, 23rd July 1878.

Towards the end of 1876, overtures of allegiance to Persia were also made by the Tekke Turkomans, under Kooshed Khau, but his terms were not approved, and his proposals were coldly received. The negotiations, therefore, remained in abeyance until 1877, when hearing of those newly set on foot by the Akhals, they resolved to send a deputation to Teheran, offering their allegiance on similar terms. The death of the chief, Kooshed Khan in September 1877, and the succession of his son, Baba Khan, probably facilitated matters in this respect.

The deputation reached Teheran* in November 1877. The party consisted of 35 Chiefs, and an arrangement was arrived at as follows :—

1. The Merv Turkomans declared their allegiance to Persia.
2. They engaged that raids by them on that country should entirely cease.
3. That the Persian flag should be hoisted at Merv.
4. That a Persian agent should reside at Merv on the part of the Shah.
5. That 100 hostages (men of position from the four divisions of the tribe) should reside at Meshed, but without their families.
6. That a body of 1,000 horsemen should be sent to Meshed (about 250 from each division of the tribe) to be employed in the service of the Persian Government. These horsemen to provide their own horses and arms, and to be under the command of their own Chiefs, but to be paid by the Persian Government, for employment in any part of Persia where their services are required.

The Persian Government on their side agreed to the following points :—

1. To recognize the Merv Turkomans as Persian subjects, and to promise them protection and favourable treatment.
2. To defray the expenses of the hostages sent to Meshed, which may be estimated at about 6,000 tomans a year.
3. To pay the horsemen furnished by the Turkomans for service in Persia at the same rate as that allowed by the Government to the Khorassan Irregular Horse, which will amount to over 30,000 tomans annually.
4. To grant permission for 1,000 families of Merv Tekke Turkomans to occupy old Serakhs and the lands adjacent on the Tejjen.

The Shah gave a firman to the Chiefs, stating in general terms that the Tekke Turkomans of Merv have always been, and now are, subjects of Persia ; that all disloyal acts committed by them in past years were forgiven, and that in consideration of their now engaging to act as obedient and faithful subjects, His Majesty assured them of their protection and favour. The Persian Hissam-es-Sultanch, formerly Governor General of Khorassan, has re-

NOTE.—According to a telegram from Captain Napier, dated 19th June 1878, serious dissensions regarding succession to chiefship exist at Merv. It appears from a letter of the 3rd of June 1878, from Captain Napier, that the Merv clans are divided into several factions. Half of the tribe favour the claims to the Chiefship of Nur Verdee Khan of the Akhals, the most popular and influential man of the whole tribe. Others support Baba Khan, son of the deceased Chief, &c.

* Mr. Tylour Thomson to Earl of Derby, 9th November 1877. Memorandum by Mr. Ronald Thomson, dated 31st December 1877. Government of India Letter, No. 22, Secret, 22nd February 1878.

commended that Abul Hassan Khan, the son of the Chief of Koochan, should be sent to Merv on the part of the Shah.

* Mr. Tylour Thomson to Earl of Derby, No. 2, of 3rd January 1878.

"The Merv Chiefs,"* Mr. R. Thomson says, "believe that the Akhal portion of their tribe will eventually withdraw from the Akhal country and join them at Merv. They consider that it would be a gain for the whole tribe were they to do so, because the encampments they occupy at present along the line of the Atok are straggling, and some of them ill-supplied with water, and they are divided from each other by tracts of desert which prevents them from rallying in time to support any portion of the tribe that may be suddenly attacked; whereas at Merv each camp has the advantage of an equally abundant supply of water with all the others and an ample extent of fertile land, and all the tribes occupy a compact position on the Moorghab, which is very favourable for defence. Their lands at Merv are fully sufficient to accommodate more than double the number of those now occupying them.

"The Tekke Chiefs," says Mr. Tylour Thomson, "are under the belief that they have nothing to expect from England, owing to the remoteness of her position. They would have preferred the Afghans to the Persians, and they would have been disposed to go over to them if Yacoob Khan had been in power, or if he had been in favour with his father the Ameer, because they had confidence in him."

Mr. R. Thomson to Marquis of Salisbury, No. 49, of 3rd June 1878.

In a recent Despatch,† Mr. R. Thomson believes that the present moment is an opportune one for Russia to bring the Akhal Turkistan tribes under her control, and he is of opinion that the arrangement would be viewed with satisfaction by the Shah and his Government.

"In view," he says, "of the helplessness of the Turkomans to defend themselves, and the inability of Persia to assert her territorial claims, there would appear to be no means of preventing the advance of Russia in that direction, unless it can be effected through some agreement entered into between us and the Russian Government for the recognition either of the independence or the allegiance to Persia of these Turkoman tribes, and, failing an understanding of that nature, it seems not unlikely that, as many well informed Persians believe, the whole of the Akhal country, together with Merv, and possibly the Upper Atrek valley as well, will in the next two years have become Russian possessions."

† Lord Augustus Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, 20th April 1878.
Foreign Office to India Office, 20th May 1878.

Lord Augustus Loftus‡ thinks that if the Persian Government should succeed in restraining its new subjects from their lawless habits, thereby obviating any excuse for Russian military intervention or advance in those parts, it would, no doubt, be to the advantage of all concerned; but if, on the other hand, the Turkomans by their submission to Persia should look only for a protection against Russia, there would be a constant danger that the Persian

Government might be held responsible by Russia for their good behaviour, and thus be exposed at all times to Russian menace and intervention. As her overwhelming military power secures to Russia the predominant influence in Persia, she might consider the subjection of the Tekkes and Akhals to Persia as tantamount to their submission to herself. Thus at no distant date the Merv Turcomans might serve, Lord Augustus Loftus thinks, as an advanced guard of Russia and Persia against Herat, towards which place the latter power has always turned a covetous eye. From this point of view, Russia may be looked upon as a considerable gainer by the peaceful understanding lately come to between Persia and the Merv tribes, since it secures to her advantages which, in spite of the repeated efforts made by her commander at Krasnovodsk, she has hitherto been unable to obtain by direct action.

REPORTED SECRET UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE SHAH AS TO THE CESSION OF SOME PART OF THE NORTHERN BOUNDARY OF PERSIA.—Early in 1878, the British Consul at Tiflis* reported that the Shah was said to be going to St. Petersburg, with a view to effect an exchange of territory on the Atrek for the recently annexed Turkish province of Bayazid.

Hussein Khan, the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs in attendance on the Shah, called on Lord A. Loftus† at St. Petersburg, and professed entire ignorance of any such proposal.

The British Ambassador at Constantinople‡ also reported that General Ignatieff was endeavouring to prevail upon the Turks to cede Kotur to Persia, on account of a secret understanding with Persia that in return for this she was to make over to Russia some part of the coast of the Caspian. Mr. Ronald Thomson§ inquired of the Persian Minister whether it was true that communications had passed between Persia and Russia with reference to Kotur. He earnestly asserted that none had passed, that no secret understanding existed for the cession to Russia of Persian territory on the Caspian, and that in the event of such a proposal being put forward he felt certain the Shah would firmly refuse to entertain it.

These statements in regard to a secret understanding between Russia and Persia in regard to the cession of the Atrek districts are of course mere reports; but some colour is given to them by the declaration of the Persian Foreign Minister, already quoted in the preceding page, that the Shah's Government preferred the Russians to the Akhals as neighbours, and by the fact that, as recognized by the Treaty of Berlin, Kotur has been ceded to Persia.

COURSE OF EVENTS IN CENTRAL ASIA SINCE 1874-75, INCLUDING EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN ENGLAND AND RUSSIA ON THE SUBJECT OF MERV,

* Acting Consul Lyall to Marquis of Salisbury, Tiflis, 3rd and 12th April 1878.
Foreign Office to India Office, 3rd and 20th May.

† Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, 5th June 1878.

Foreign Office to India Office, 14th June 1878.

‡ Telegram from Mr. Layard to the Earl of Derby, 1st March 1878. Foreign Office to India Office, 2nd March 1878.

§ Mr. R. Thomson to Marquis of Salisbury, Teheran, 5th and 12th March 1878.

Foreign Office to India Office, 5th June 1878.

NOTE.—A telegram from Mr. Ronald Thomson, of 15th August 1878, to the Marquis of Salisbury, states that the Shah, in a special audience, gave him a solemn assurance that no agreement or undertaking in reference to invasion of Akhal, or any other political subject, existed between the Persian and Russian Governments. His Majesty had evidently, Mr. Thomson adds, great sympathy with Russia, and appeared to be indifferent to the goodwill and confidence of England.

NOTE.—The boundary trends E.N.E. in a nearly straight line from the point where the Heri Rood river crosses the parallel of 36° to Khoja Saleh on the Oxus, and its principal source, the Panja, to Wood's Lake Victoria. The boundary line skirts and includes the provinces of Balkh; Maimana, with its dependencies of Andkoi, &c.; and Herat, with its dependencies between the Murghab and Here-ud rivers. (See Lord Granville's Despatch, 17th October 1872.)

* Foreign Secretary to Government of Punjab, 22nd March 1873.
Viceroy to Shere Ali, 6th September 1873.

† Lord A. Loftus to Earl of Derby, 29th October 1873.

AND MOVEMENTS OF RUSSIAN TROOPS AND AGENTS.

—It is unnecessary for the objects of this Note to recapitulate the course of negotiations between the English and Russian Cabinets which dragged on their slow length from 1869 to 1873, terminating in the recognition of Afghanistan as a State outside the sphere of Russian action, in the formal acknowledgment of the boundary fixed by the British Government, and in the declaration that the Russian Emperor had no intention of extending his empire further south.

The good effect of this agreement, which, it may be added, was formally communicated* by the Indian Government to the Amir of Cabul, was soon neutralized by the virtual annexation of Khiva in June 1873, and by the acquisition by Russia of exclusive rights in the navigation of the Oxus. The agreement was also followed by further interference with the Turkomans on the part of the Russian Turkistan authorities, notwithstanding the earnest disclaimers of the Russian Cabinet. The British Government were prepared somewhat for this by Lord Augustus Loftus. The British Ambassador at St. Petersburg warned† Her Majesty's Government not to rely upon assurances then received from M. de Stremoukoff, and subsequently reiterated by the Czar himself, that the Russian Government had no intention of organizing any expedition against the Turkomans. His Excellency, on that occasion, pointed out that the fruits of the Khiva campaign could not fully be secured to Russia without bringing under her dominion the whole district lying between the Caspian and the Oxus; and that this would, at no distant time, afford a pretext for the possession of the line of the Tekke forts north of the Atrek and extending nearly to Merv. The opinion of Her Majesty's Ambassador was justified by the fact that, not many weeks after the expression of it, General Lomakin, the newly appointed Governor of Krasnovodsk, in virtue of orders received from the Grand Duke Michael, claimed supreme authority, as has been previously mentioned, not only over the Atrek and Gurgan Chiefs, but also over the whole of the tribes lying between the Caspian Sea, Merv, and Charjui. Expeditions were at the same time launched against Bayat Hadji and Karee Kala, in violation of the northern frontier of Persia.

An announcement then appeared in the "Moscow Gazette" to the effect that three companies of infantry would be despatched by sea to Chikishlar,‡ from whence they would proceed up the Atrek river as far as a locality called Bayat Hadji, where they would remain till the following December to watch the movements of Turkomans. This attracted attention to the position of Karee-kala, on which the Russians were reported to be marching. Persia was prepared to protest against the occupation of this post, provided she received support from the British Government§ in the shape of remonstrances with Russia, similar to those addressed to her on

† Lord A. Loftus, No. 373, dated 14th October 1874.

‡ Mr. Thomson, No. 127, dated 12th August 1875.

§ Mr. Tylour Thomson's Telegraph, 12th December 1874.

behalf of Afghanistan, but Her Majesty's Government deemed it unwise to do so, and sent the following instructions* on the subject to Teheran:—

"Her Majesty's Government cannot but regret any inroad of Russia into the territories of the Tekke Turkoman tribes, as likely to give rise to frontier disputes with Persia on the one hand, and Afghanistan on the other, upon which a misunderstanding might not impossibly ensue.

"With a view to prevent any such contingency, you are aware that Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg was instructed in January last to point out to the Russian Government the danger of a Russian occupation of Merv. Satisfactory assurances were given by the Emperor and Prince Gortchakoff to the effect that Russia had no intention of attacking the Turkomans, except in self-defence, and that she had no wish to occupy Merv.

"As regards the present advance of the Russians to Karee-Kala, Her Majesty's Government fear that, in the present ill-defined state of the Persian frontier, Persia would not be justified in protesting against this act, and still less would Her Majesty's Government have a right to interfere.

"Her Majesty's Government have, however, lately instructed Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg to call the attention of the Russian Government to that part of General Lomakin's circular in which he styles himself Governor over the territory lying between the Atrek and the Goorgaun, and M. de Westmann assured Lord A. Loftus that the expression used by General Lomakin was purely accidental."

General Lomakin's reconnaissance, which returned safely to Krasnovodsk after an absence of four months, was more successful than even he himself anticipated, as not only was a suitable site† found at Bayat Hadji for the erection of a fort, but the Turkomans of the Atrek, as well as those of the Akhal country, showed not only submission to, but an inclination to assist, the Russian troops.

The strangest fact connected with this invasion of Persian frontier by General Lomakin was the apparent willingness of Persia‡ to act in concert with Russia on the line of the Atrek and of the Akhal. Lord A. Loftus explained this fact by information which had reached him of some recent understanding between Russia and Persia:—

"From private information which has reached me," he says, "I am inclined to think that the Russian Government have some notion of forming a separate independent State of the Province of Herat detached from the sovereignty of Afghanistan, and charged, in common understanding with Persia and Russia, to keep under subjection the Tekke Turkomans; or that, if the constitution of an independent State should be impracticable, they (the Russian Government) may seek to gain the entire support of Persia, by holding out to the Shah the hopes of acquiring Herat and the

* Earl of Derby to Mr. Tylour Thomson, 8th January 1875.

† Lord A. Loftus, No. 464, dated 23rd December 1874.

‡ Lord A. Loftus, No. 466, Secret, dated 23rd December 1874.

The following is an extract of the report of the Russian Minister of War upon the subject:—

"Les reconnaissances faites sur plusieurs points ont montré que le meilleur endroit pour la construction d'un fort serait Douz-Oloun, point situé à une très petite distance de Boyat-Hodgi-Olum.

"Une forte position sur ce point nous permettrait de dominer le cours de l'Atrek, et nous garantirait en même temps les moyens de tenir en respect les peuplades barbares des Steppes Chiviens."

† Lord A. Loftus, No. 429, Secret, 24th November 1874.

‡ Mr. Tylour Thomson to Earl of Derby, 1st March 1874.

“surrounding district as a tributary State under the Government of Abdul Rahman Khan, now enjoying the protection of the Russian Government at Samarkand.”

* Lord A. Loftus to Earl of Derby, 6th, 19th, and 27th April 1875.

On the 4th of March 1875, the Emperor of Russia* decided to postpone till a more favourable moment the proposed occupation of a central point on the Atrek by means of the permanent fort just mentioned at Bayat Hadji; this was stated to be owing to want of funds for its construction; but it was thought that the susceptibility of England as to Russian designs on Merv had much to do with the Emperor's decision.

† Earl of Derby to Lord A. Loftus, 19th March 1875.

Lord A. Loftus, 30th March 1875.

‡ This declaration was subsequently repeated in 1876. The following are the declarations made by the Russian Government in respect to Afghanistan from 1869 to 1876.

(1.) *Prince Gortchakov to Baron Brunnow, dated 24th February (7th March) 1869.*—Vous pouvez donc, Mon Cher Baron, réitérer au Principal Secrétaire d'Etat de S. M. B. l'assurance positive que S. M. Imperiale considère l'Afghanistan comme entièrement en dehors de la sphère où la Russie peut être appelé à exercer son influence. Aucune intervention ou interference quelconque contraire à l'indépendance de cet Etat n'entre dans ses intentions.

(2.) *Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg, dated 28th January 1874.*—As regards Afghanistan, His Highness (Prince Gortchakov) repeated to me that the Imperial Government considered that kingdom to be beyond the sphere of their political action, and that, happen what might, in the internal state of that country, the Imperial Government would not interfere.

(3.) *Prince Gortchakov to Count Brunnow, (communicated by Count Brunnow, to Lord Granville, 17th February 1874).*—J'ai réitéré à Lord A. Loftus l'assurance positive que le Cabinet Imperial persiste à considérer l'Afghanistan comme entièrement en dehors de sa sphère d'action.

(4.) *Memorandum accompanying Prince Gortchakov's letter to Count Schouvalov, dated 5th April 1875.*—Dans sa dépêche responsive en date du 21st Janvier 1874, Son Altesse le Prince Gortchakov réitéra l'assurance positive que le Gouvernement Impérial persistait à considérer l'Afghanistan comme entièrement en dehors de sa sphère d'action.

(5.) *Prince Gortchakov to Count Schouvalov, dated 3rd (15th February) 1876.*—Veuillez dire à S. E. d'ordre de notre Auguste Maître que nous adhérons entièrement aux conclusions d'après lesquelles en maintenant, de part et d'autre, l'arrangement convenu quant aux limites de l'Afghanistan, qui demeurerait en dehors de la sphère d'action de la Russie, les deux Cabinets considéraient comme closes les discussions reconnues peu pratiques relatives à la zone neutre et à la zone intermédiaire.

§ India Office to Foreign Office, 1875.

It seemed necessary, however, for the Russian Government to sound the English Cabinet as to how any future operations in the Turkoman country would be viewed. And the mode adopted was as follows.

The Russian Ambassador at the Court of St. James called upon the Earl of Derby on the 12th of March 1875, with a view of “ascertaining† more clearly than he had as yet done the views of “Her Majesty's Government on the Central Asian “question.” It is not worth while to say more of this conversation than that, in the course of it, Lord Derby reminded Count Schouvaloff of a warning he had previously given to him of the great importance which the Indian Government attached to Merv, and of the danger to our relations that would ensue if it were meddled with. A similar conversation took place at St. Petersburg between Count Schouvaloff and Lord A. Loftus.

These verbal interchanges of views resulted in an official communication, dated the 5th of April 1875, addressed by Prince Gortchakov to Count Schouvaloff, enclosing a Memorandum which reviewed all the correspondence that had passed between the two Governments since the original Russian Circular of November 1864, and at the same time recorded a determination of the Czar “not to extend the frontier of Russia beyond its present limits either on the side of Bokhara or on that of Krasnovodsk and the Atrek.”

“Sa Majesté Impériale,” it said, “n'à aucunement l'intention d'étendre les frontières de la Russie telles qu'elles existent actuellement dans l'Asie Centrale, ni du côté du Bokhara, ni du côté de Krasnovodsk et de l'Atrek.”

To this declaration was added‡ a strong reiteration of opinion on part of the Russian Government that Afghanistan was a State outside the sphere of Russian action. These formal assurances on the part of Russia were gravely qualified, however, by a claim to “full liberty of action over the countries intervening between the Russian possessions and Afghanistan.” The Marquis of Salisbury, as Secretary of State for India, in giving his opinion on the matter, pointed out§ that if such a claim as this were allowed to pass unchallenged it might, sooner or later, lead to complications affecting British interests at Merv

which might seriously embarrass Her Majesty's Government. "It must be borne in mind," he said, "that the establishment of Russian supremacy "in Khiva and on the south-eastern coast of the "Caspian has taken place since the course of negotiations (1869—73) described in the general body "of the Memorandum, whilst the occupation of the "Atrek districts by Russian troops may at any "time materially affect our relations with Persia. "On these and other considerations it is inexpedient, if not impossible, in Lord Salisbury's "opinion, for Her Majesty's Government to accept "the position of inaction which Prince Gortchakow's letter apparently wishes to force upon "it, whatever may be the character of future "operations by Russia against the Turkomans."

This view was practically set forth in the Reply of the English Cabinet* to Prince Gortchakow's despatch and Memorandum.

* Earl of Derby to Lord A. Loftus, 25th October 1875.

"The discussions which took place," it was said in this Reply, "in the succeeding years (1869—73) as to the delimitation of the frontiers of Afghanistan happily terminated by the 'full and entire' adhesions of the Imperial Cabinet, in their Despatch of 19th January 1873, to the line of demarcation proposed by Lord Granville in his Despatch of October 1872, and to the recognition of Afghanistan as an independent State, which should remain external to the action of Russia. * * But it is apparent from the *résumé* of the agreement given at the close of the Memorandum and the paragraphs which follow, that the Imperial Cabinet is of opinion that in arriving at an understanding with respect to Afghanistan the common policy of the two Governments has been completely fulfilled, and that it is a part of such understanding that entire liberty of action is left to Russia in all the territories lying between her own frontier and that of Afghanistan. Whatever may be the ultimate destiny of Russia in the course of its civilizing mission in Central Asia, it is impossible not to see that, in view of the present conditions of the Turkoman tribes, of the relations in which they stand to the Ruler of Afghanistan on the one hand, and those between that Ruler and the Government of India on the other, that each successive advance of the Russian frontier towards Afghanistan may involve complications which it is equally the interest of both England and Russia to avoid, and may raise up the most serious obstacles to the continued pursuance of the policy which has hitherto guided both powers alike to maintain intact the integrity of Afghan territory.

"This is an object," the reply of the British Cabinet proceeded to state, "to which Her Majesty's Government attach the highest importance, and they must reserve to themselves the most complete liberty of action under all future contingencies as to the measures which may, in their opinion, be necessary to secure it. They cannot but feel that

such an event, for instance, as the occupation of Merv, which would bring the line of Russian territory into direct contact with Afghan territory, would arouse the susceptibilities of the Ameer to the highest degree, and possibly involve him in a common course of defensive action with the Turkoman tribes upon his borders. Under such circumstances, it is unnecessary to observe how difficult it might be for the Imperial Government to maintain a policy of strict abstention in accordance with its present assurances, or how impossible it might be for Her Majesty's Government to exert any effectual control over the actions of the Ameer, without undertaking responsibilities which they would most reluctantly assume, and which would virtually involve the very result which both Governments desire to avert, viz., the contact of the two powers in Central Asia."

"Whatever may be the desire," it was added, "of both Governments to act in concert in bringing the agencies of civilization to bear upon the wild and predatory races of the regions which separate their dominions, the time has not arrived when such a co-operation could be made intelligible to the rulers and people of the Khanates.

"The presence of two centres of European power and influence in their midst would wear in their eyes an aspect of mutual menace and rivalry, and encourage hopes and speculations unfavourable to the growth of the relations between England and Russia, which are an important condition of success in the task on which both are engaged, each in their separate sphere, of maintaining order and promoting civilization in their Asiatic possessions.

"Nor can it be denied that the atmosphere of suspicion, intrigue, and discord which would surround the military authorities of both powers, might at any time provoke an attitude of reciprocal distrust which might frustrate the wishes, and defeat the deliberate policy of their respective Governments, and react perniciously on the public opinion of Russia on the one hand, and of England and India on the other.

"It is for these reasons that Her Majesty's Government have always deprecated the further extension of Russian territory towards the Afghan borders, and that they have now received, with the most sincere satisfaction the assurances conveyed in Prince Gortschakoff's despatch as to the enlightened conviction of His Imperial Majesty's that such extension, either on the side of Bokhara, of Krasnovodsk, or of the Atrek, is contrary to Russian interests, and that formal orders have been given that all future action in those regions is to be strictly confined to the defence of existing limits and the protection of property and commerce from pillage and brigandage."

This important Communication was answered by a Despatch from Prince Gortschakoff to Count Schouvaloff, dated the 3rd of February 1876, expressing the Emperor's satisfaction with the friendly tone and breadth of view which characterised it,

but omitting any marked reference to the language held by the English Memorandum refuting the claim of Russian rights over the Turkoman country:—"Veuillez dire à son Excellence," it simply said, "d'ordre de notre Auguste Maître que nous adhérons entièrement aux conclusions d'après lesquelles en maintenant de part d'autre, l'arrangement convenu, quant aux limites de l'Afghanistan que demeurerait en dehors de la sphere d'action de la Russie, les deux cabinets considéreraient comme closes les discussions reconnues peu pratiques relatives à la zone neutre et à la zone intermédiaire tout en conservant leur pleine liberté d'action, ils se régleraient d'après le désir mutuel de tenir un juste compte de leurs intérêts et de leurs nécessités respectives, en évitant dans la mesure du possible un contact immédiat entre eux, ainsi que des collisions entre les états Asiatiques placés dans le rayon de leur influence."

Meanwhile General Lomakin made great,* although unsuccessful, efforts to establish a Russian post on the mainland at Gez, opposite Ashurada; building materials were at the same time collected for the erection of the fort at Bayat Hadji; and, notwithstanding the order of the Emperor to the contrary, a military expedition, consisting of 2,000 men, four guns, and a rocket battery, was, under the Czar's direct sanction (obtained at Ems on 2nd June 1875), organized to scour the country "in a most amicable spirit," between the Balkans and the Atrek. The proposed reconnoissance started under General Lomakin from Krasnovodsk in July 1875, visited Chikislar, Bayat Hadji, and Chat-i-Atrek (the point at which the Simbar and Atrek join), and, after an absence of some months, during which the nominal submission of the Akhal Tekkes was obtained, safely reached home again. Preparations were made at the same time by the Russian authorities for the permanent occupation of Karee Kala. Close upon this renewed activity followed the annexation of Kokand, which, under the name of Ferghana, was, on the 7th February 1876, added to the Russian dominions.

At this period also a marked increase took place in the correspondence between General Kauffman† and the Ameer of Cabul, to whose capital successive Russian (native) agents were deputed. The general tone of the letters changed from that of mere compliment to matters affecting the foreign interests and internal affairs of Afghanistan, and at the same time Shere Ali ceased to submit them for examination, as heretofore, to the Government of India. Prince Gortchakoff denied that General Kauffman acted at Cabul by agent or otherwise, and on Her Majesty's Government protesting against his interference, and expressing the opinion that the character of his letters and their bearers was a sufficient reason for the discontinuance of these communications, the only redress obtained from M. Giers was a simple denial‡ of this assumption, and an assertion that the Russian Government had no intention of entering

* Mr. T. Thomson to Earl of Derby, 22nd April, 18th May, and 18th June 1875.

NOTE.—A Russian exploring expedition of some importance visited, at this time, Hissar, Kolab, and Sherabad, with the consent of the Ameer of Bokhara, and drew up a detailed map of those hitherto unknown regions.

† See Government of India letter to Secretary of State, No. 41, Secret, dated 18th May 1878, and No. 11, Secret, dated 3rd May 1877.

Note.—For fuller details see Plowden's Précis, 1878.

‡ Lord A. Loftus to M. Giers of 22nd February 1877, and reply of 5th March 1877.

into any treaty engagement with Shere Ali. The Russian agents continued at Cabul.

Any further expedition on the part of General Lomakin against the Turkomans was again forbidden by the Emperor, who had been told by Count Schouvaloff* that whilst the annexation of Kokand had produced no notable impression on public opinion in England, yet that any extension on the other hand from the Caspian towards the Persian and Afghan frontiers would be very differently viewed, and that any advance on the Atrek or towards Merv would immediately give rise to action on the part of the Indian Government.

Nevertheless, in the autumn of 1876 General Lomakin left Krasnovodsk† for a reconnoissance ostensibly towards Khiva, but in reality into the Akhal country. He reached Kizil Arvat in November, but appears only to have remained a brief period.

He soon organized a new expedition, however, and in the spring of 1877‡ marched again towards Kizil Arvat with two regiments of infantry, 1,200 Cossacks, 200 of the Yemoot horse, and six guns. At the same time it was reported that several Russian officers had reached Charjui on the Oxus, giving every appearance of at last a definite move on Merv. General Lomakin appears to have reached Kizil Arvat about the 11th of May, and to have been attacked by a large body of Akhals, whom he defeated with great loss; he endeavoured at the same time to force the people of Kareekala and Nokkar, who both acknowledged Persian suzerainty, to change their allegiance to Russia. Further operations were stopped, however, not only it is believed because the Turkomans forced General Lomakin to retire, but also on account of the outbreak of war between Russia and Turkey, which caused his sudden recall to Krasnovodsk.

Her Majesty's Government protested§ against General Lomakin's aggressive movements, impressing on the Russian Government "the evil consequences which must follow the occupation of Merv," to which his operations might probably lead. "Such an occupation," wrote Lord A. Loftus to M. Giers, "would be held by the general opinion of the inhabitants of the neighbouring regions of Asia as announcing a design on the part of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia to extend his influence, if not his dominions, into territories with which Her Majesty's Government have understood from the Government of His Imperial Majesty that it is not His Majesty's intention to interfere. Such an impression would impose on Her Majesty's Government the necessity of making a corresponding advance, in order to allay apprehension and remove misconception from the minds of the people of those countries. They would not, however, look upon so close an approximation of the outposts of the two Empires as in itself desirable, or likely to facilitate the discharge of the difficult duties with which the

* Lord A. Loftus to Earl of Derby, dated 14th April 1876.

† Mr. Tylour Thomson to Earl of Derby, September 1876.

‡ Mr. Tylour Thomson to Earl of Derby, 12th June 1877.

§ Lord A. Loftus to Earl of Derby, 9th June 1877.

“ administrations of each country are charged.
 “ With a view to the reciprocal interests of both
 “ countries, and to the maintenance of the good
 “ understanding now existing between them in
 “ regard to the affairs of Central Asia, I am in-
 “ structed to state that Her Majesty’s Government
 “ entertain a confident hope that His Majesty the
 “ Emperor of Russia will issue to his military com-
 “ manders in those parts the strictest injunctions
 “ to abstain, in the course of any operations which
 “ the misconduct of the Turkomans may render
 “ necessary, from advancing into the neighbourhood
 “ of Merv.”

M. de Giers replied to this communication* by a Despatch addressed to Count Schouvaloff, dated the 18th July 1877, O.S., of which the purport was that General Lomakin’s expedition against Kizil Arvat was merely to chastise that portion of the Turkomans who infested the road between Krasnovodsk and Khiva. “ Les peuplades appartiennent,” it was added, “ à une branche de Turcomans entièrement distincte de celles des Teccés de Merv, point distant de 1,000 verstes de Krasnovodsk. Le mouvement sur Kizil Arvat n’est d’ailleurs qu’une simple expédition militaire, comme nos troupes du Caucase en entreprennent tous les ans pour le maintien de la tranquillité sur nos frontières. Les ordres les plus formels ont été donnés au commandant de la colonne de ne pas dépasser ses instructions dans ce sens. Les inquiétudes relatives à Merv tombent d’elles mêmes en présence de ces franches explications.”

The Government of India, meanwhile, deemed this renewed activity on the part of the Russian authorities in Turkistan to be of sufficient importance (in connection with General Kauffman’s interference in Afghanistan) to justify an earnest representation† on their part to Her Majesty’s Government, dealing as a whole with the steady advance of Russia into the Turkoman country.

It was not as an unexpected act of aggression, but as an important step in a long meditated and well prepared movement, that the Government of India viewed with extreme anxiety the reported Russian occupation of Kizil Arvat, and it was to the necessary consequences of that step in connection with the line of policy it indicated that it desired to invite the attention of Her Majesty’s Government. The political and strategical importance of Merv had always been recognized as strongly, it was believed, by the Government of Her Majesty as by the Government of India. But it was no less strongly recognized by the Russian, Persian, and Afghan Governments. “ The views of the Afghan Government, and its apprehensions as to the fate of Merv, were,” it was said, “ laid before the Government of India by the Ameer’s Envoy in 1873, with a view to some timely agreement between the two Governments in reference to the situation which would arise if the Merv and Akhal Turkomans were driven to seek refuge

* Secretary of State to Government of India, No. 73 of 15th November 1877.

† Government of India to India Office, No. 21, Secret, 2nd July 1877.

“ within Afghan territory. But little attention
 “ was paid at that time to what was then regarded
 “ as a remote contingency.

* Memorandum handed to the Earl of Derby by Malcolm Khan in 1874.

“ Malcolm Khan, the Persian Envoy at the Court of St. James, in a Memorandum,* which he handed to the Earl of Derby in 1874, thus expressed his sense of the importance of Merv:—‘ Is it possible,’ he asked, ‘ for a moment seriously to doubt the aim, ‘ and the successful issue, of a policy which has ‘ been planned and carried out with such far-sightedness? So far as we are concerned, we feel ‘ sure that nothing more is required than the system ‘ of caravans, which are being organized at Moscow ‘ and on the Caucasus, with a mixture of the military element, to peacefully establish the Russian ‘ power on both banks of the Atrek. And then, ‘ what would remain to keep the Russians from ‘ Merv? They would be undisturbed masters of a ‘ solid basis; and, having at their command all ‘ needful resources, they would merely have to ‘ secure the formal submission of tribes who are ‘ already half dependent, and to traverse a tract as ‘ fertile as it is favourable to military movements. ‘ There is one point which will still further smooth ‘ the way for the Russian expedition to Merv, and ‘ that is, that unfortunately the importance of the ‘ undertaking will be completely veiled from the ‘ eyes of the English people. Merv, deprived of all ‘ present vitality, and lost among the ruins of Asia, ‘ seems to the European mind to be of no practical ‘ value—of no real interest, in short, it has nothing ‘ which can draw public attention to the invader. ‘ Russia may establish herself at Merv almost without Europe being aware of it. And yet Merv is ‘ undoubtedly the most important spot in Central ‘ Asia. Situated in a country of almost fabulous ‘ fertility, it commands equally Turkistan, Afghanistan, and Khorassan. All the lines of communication for military and commercial purposes ‘ between Meshed and Bokhara, Khiva and Herat, ‘ necessarily converge upon Merv. In every respect, and especially with respect to Russia, the ‘ position of Merv is infinitely superior to that of ‘ Herat.’

Finally, as regards the Russian Government itself, “ so fully,” wrote the Government of India, “ does that Government appreciate the political and strategical importance of the Merv district that, according to Mr. Ronald Thomson, the line of the Persian frontier is laid down in all the maps recently published by the Russian Government so as to exclude Deregez and Sarakhs from Persian territory, and bring the south-eastern border of Merv to within 25 miles of Herat, and 20 miles of Maimena.

“ Thus, all the Powers directly interested in the destinies of Central Asia have fully recognized the importance of that locality in which the military authorities of Russia are steadily and carefully carrying out the plans long since formed, and urged upon the Czar, by the Grand Duke Michael. There

is now every prospect that these plans, if not foiled by the intervention of Her Majesty's Government, will shortly be carried to a successful issue. To realize fully, however, the importance of the move already made, we must look still further ahead, and consider what will be the unavoidable consequences of the occupation of Merv.

"Both the British Government and the Ameer of Cabul have already shown that they foresee very clearly one result of such an occupation. In 1875, Lord Derby, writing to Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg, said,—'They (Her Majesty's Government) cannot but feel that such an event, for instance, as the occupation of Merv, which would bring the line of Russian territory into direct contact with Afghan territory, would arouse the susceptibilities of the Ameer to the highest degree, and possibly involve him in a common cause of defensive action with the Turkoman tribes upon the borders.'

"That such complications would arise, it is impossible to doubt; nor can there be any uncertainty as to their solution. Herat is about 250 miles from Merv, but considerably less than half that distance from the boundary of the Merv district. For every act of hostility on the part of the previously dispossessed Turkomans, the Government of Herat would be held responsible by the Russians. Every condition, and every plea, which has caused or covered the advance of Russia from Orenburg to the Oxus, would recur with augmented cogency in the situation thus brought about, and, unless the course of history were suddenly reversed, or the conditions of the situation materially altered by the active interference of the British Government, the occupation of Herat by the Russians would, within no very distant period, follow as certainly on the occupation of Merv as that of Tashkend on the occupation of Chemkend, or that of Khojend and Samarcand on the conquest of Tashkend. Further than this it is unnecessary to look. The occupation of Herat would mean the establishment of Russian sovereignty or influence throughout Afghanistan, and its extension to the present frontiers of British India, carrying with it the command of all the passes into North-western India.

"Another immediate consequence of the Russian occupation of Merv would be the closing of our trade routes to Central Asia and Northern Persia. All commercial transactions with Afghanistan would simultaneously suffer, and, if our Asiatic trade were not altogether extinguished, it would be grievously crippled and depressed by the crushing weight of Russian tariffs.

"It has sometimes been urged," the Government of India said, "upon the consideration of Indian statesmen that the Empire of India has nothing to fear from such extension of Russian power, inasmuch as every step forward on the part of Russia, by taking her further from her base, must weaken her

power of action, while increasing her financial burdens. But, in the first place, this is an assumption not borne out by experience. So far from Russia showing signs of weakness as the result of distant extension of empire, her latest and most distant expeditions have been carried out on a scale and with a vigour far surpassing all former ones in Central Asia, and, both militarily and diplomatically, she has never been more active than since the occupation of Khiva. In the next place, the occupation of Merv and Herat would *not* extend and weaken her military lines, but, on the contrary, contract and strengthen them. Merv and Herat are much nearer to the Russian base on the Caspian than Tashkend to its base, Orenburg, and the intervening country is richer, affording (as shown by Captain Napier) an almost inexhaustible supply of military material. It would be far easier for Russia to create large military establishments, and more economical to maintain them, at these points than at Tashkend. The probable result of the occupation of Merv would be the transfer thither of a considerable part of the military establishments from Turkistan. In any case, Russia's line of operations would be contracted, and her power for offence or defence largely increased, without any corresponding increase in military expenditure. The cost of her posts on the Oxus, which is now very heavy, would be reduced by about one half.

"Lastly, and on this we cannot too strongly insist," added Lord Lytton's Government, "the danger we anticipate to India is not that arising from an adventurous Russian invasion. It is the far more serious danger inevitably involved in the extension of Russian influence over Afghanistan, till that State becomes a mere tool in the hands of Russia, powerless to resist her commands. When this happens, as happen it must ere long, if not averted by rapid and efficient action on the part of the British Government, then our Indian frontier armaments, instead of being calculated, as they are, to resist mere mountain tribes, without organization or combined action, will have to be recast on a scale fit to cope with organized and combined attacks supported by European skill, arms, money, and possibly even troops. India itself will then become exposed to an influence rival and hostile to our own, and with all the prestige of success upon its side. Every passing cloud of disagreement in European politics will then at once make itself felt throughout the length of our frontier, and send a thrill of hope to every discontented mind in India; and we shall then be bound, beyond escape, to accept, in a hopelessly unfavourable position, the struggle for supremacy in the East, whenever that struggle is forced upon us."

Her Majesty's Government had in 1875 reserved to themselves complete liberty of action in all future contingencies in the pursuance of the policy of maintaining the integrity of Afghan territory, and it remained to be seen whether any significance

was to be attached to these words. "The first course of action," said the Government of India, "suggested by the circumstances under consideration is, the notice of them by Her Majesty's Government with a strong protest against the proceedings of the Russian authorities in Central Asia. To us it appears that such a step would not be conducive to any practical result. Our experience of past communications between the British and Russian Governments, on Central Asian affairs, does not encourage us to believe that a protest, even if well grounded, would be in the least degree efficacious. Another course would be a prompt and plain announcement to the Cabinet of St. Petersburg that Her Majesty's Government cannot any longer regard the boundary of the Russian Empire in Central Asia as naturally transitional, with an inherent right of indefinite expansion, and that England will regard the next step in advance as a *casus belli*."

Another course would be to make some arrangement with Persia for the support of the Turkomans against Russia. "But here we are met," it was added, "with the difficulty of not knowing whether the relations between Her Majesty's Government and the Shah are such as to hold out any hopes of enlisting the services of the latter in prompt and practical efforts to stem the progress of Russia. When Persia once before inquired if the British Government would support her in a protest against the Russian occupation of Karee Kala, it declined to interfere. The answer of Her Majesty's Government to a recent and similar request concerning the Atrek valley is not yet known to us. We cannot, however, too strongly express our conviction that, in the interests of Her Majesty's Indian Empire, no time should be lost in making every possible effort to restore British influence at Teheran, and arrest the process which is now rapidly converting Persia into a state vassal to Russia. The attainment of this object appears to us of such urgent importance that, if the chance or means of attaining it be still open to Her Majesty's Government, your Lordship may reckon on our willing co-operation, even at some pecuniary sacrifice, in any really practical efforts for that purpose.

"We are decidedly of opinion," said the Government of India, "that, in the anxious and urgent circumstances to which your Lordship's attention is here invited, no arrangement with Persia will be of practical benefit to this Empire, if it does not include the establishment of British agents with suitable escorts at Meshed or Sarakhs, and free access to Merv, through Persian territory. But, unless material guarantees are previously, or simultaneously, taken by Her Majesty's Government to prevent the policy of Persia in these regions from falling completely under the control of Russian influence, any measure likely to render Merv more dependent on that country would, instead of

being beneficial to Indian interests, only increase the embarrassments and dangers of our present situation."

The next course suggested by the Government of India was that of opening direct communication with the Tekke Turkomans, and despatching at once to Merv one or more selected officers to ascertain the real powers of resistance of the Turkomans; the imminence of the danger to them from Russia; their feelings regarding a Russian conquest; their disposition towards Persia, towards Afghanistan, and towards the British Government, and the extent to which they were prepared to resist Russia.

"If Merv be occupied by Russian troops," said Lord Lytton's Government, "while British agents are excluded from Western Afghanistan, the question of Russian or British supremacy in Afghanistan will be virtually decided. The only possible counterpoise to such an advance on the part of Russia is the establishment of a commanding British influence at Herat, visibly represented by the presence of an agent, and supported by assurances of material assistance, should Russia attempt further advances. Towards this object our recent negotiations with the Ameer were directed,* but thus far they have been unsuccessful. We do not yet despair entirely of the Ameer being brought to a truer sense of his interests. But we regard such an event as extremely improbable; more especially within any period of time sufficiently short to justify the postponement of all action on our part for the sake of ultimately securing the co-operation of His Highness. We have, therefore, to consider what will be our position, if the Ameer continues to reject all offers of our assistance or alliance, while Russia increases her influence at Cabul, and from Merv commands Herat. We shall then be obliged to choose between surrendering Afghanistan altogether to Russia, or taking more vigorous action than we have yet taken to secure our interests there.

"The surrender of Afghanistan to undisputed Russian influence would, in our opinion, necessarily involve the abandonment of Peshawur, and the acceptance of the Indus as the limit of British territory towards the north-west of India. For, unless we were able to command the passes of it, our present mountain frontier would be, not only indefensible, but dangerously provocative to attack. But the abandonment of our present frontier would be tantamount to the abandonment of the whole Empire; inasmuch as our possession of the rest of India could not possibly survive such a humiliation."

To sum up; the recommendations submitted by Lord Lytton's Government to Her Majesty's Government were as follows:—

- "(a) That British influence be re-established in Persia, by assuring the Shah that His Majesty will have adequate support from the British Government in that opposition

* These will be noticed in a separate paper.

which Persia, if thus supported, is best able to offer to further Russian encroachments in the direction of Merv.

- “(b) That British officers be sent, as soon as possible, to Merv, with authority, after ascertaining the position of affairs there, to afford to the Turkomans all the assistance in their power, if the prospects of resistance seem favourable.
- “(c) That we should be prepared to take such political and military measures as the course of events may render necessary, to prevent Russia from obtaining a footing, or even a dominant moral influence, in Afghanistan.”

“Should Her Majesty’s Government,” it was added, “be unable, either to sanction some such policy as we have here submitted to your Lordship’s consideration, or to commend to our own adoption any other of a more vigorous and practical character, we fear that it will be entirely beyond our power to avert the dangers we foresee, or to repair the consequences of their long neglected progress.”

To this important representation from India, Her Majesty’s Government replied* in the following sense :—

Her Majesty’s Government did not attach the same importance to General Lomakin’s advance as that given to it by the Government of India. There were two considerations which must be taken into account in judging of it. In the first place there was, unfortunately, a very obvious motive for an expedition against the Turkomans, which, if it were sincere, could not reasonably be blamed, and by which General Lomakin may possibly have been actuated. He had more than once, in proclamations issued by him, claimed a right to punish the Turkomans for brigandage. If tribes of the same character as the Turkomans happened to live in the vicinity of our own Indian border, punitive expeditions would probably form an ordinary incident of our frontier administration. It was quite true that the necessity of repressing the raids to which such tribes are prone might be a mere excuse for occupying an advantageous position in territory beyond the frontier. But no sufficient knowledge of the circumstances of General Lomakin’s recent advance was at hand to enable Her Majesty’s Government to determine how far the alleged motive punishing brigandage was sincere. The other consideration which tended to throw doubt on the aggressive intention of his movements, was the uncertainty whether Kizil Arvat was or was not in Russian territory already. There were no documents in the possession of Her Majesty’s Government professing to determine authoritatively the limit of the frontier of the Russian Empire to the east of the southern half of the Caspian Sea. Some distinguished geographers place it undoubtedly to the west of Kizil Arvat; but in the most recent edition of an English map of admitted authority,

* Marquis of Salisbury to Governor General of India, No. 68, Secret, 18th October 1877.

the frontier was so drawn as to include both Kizil Arvat and Kara Kala within the Russian dominions. It could not, therefore, be denied that there existed a diversity of opinion on the position of that boundary, and General Lomakin may have assumed that view which was most favourable to his own country without, on that account, necessarily evincing ulterior designs of aggression. The importance, however, of the interpretation which was to be placed on General Lomakin's movements was materially diminished by the fact that General Lomakin had since withdrawn from Kizil Arvat and returned to Krasnovodsk.

"In estimating the probability of an attack on Merv," said the Secretary of State for India, "it is necessary to distinguish carefully between the two modes by which such an enterprise may be carried out. It may be done by a *coup de main*, a rapid and uninterrupted march ending in a sudden attack; or it may be accomplished by a slow and gradual advance of the frontier line, each successively acquired zone of territory being made good, cleared of hostile tribes, and stored with magazines, before the next forward step is taken. If I rightly understand Your Excellency's views, it is an operation of the former kind that you apprehend."

"The knowledge at our command on the resources of this district (Merv) are most imperfect, and more specific and detailed information would be of no little value. Such as they are, the facts available seem to Her Majesty's Government to furnish no ground for apprehending a sudden movement of the kind you indicate. It would be an enterprise surrounded by dangers and difficulties scarcely precedented in war, undertaken for an object the advantage of which is difficult to discover. A military force separated from its base by so vast an extent of hostile country would be in too great danger itself to be an object of apprehension to neighbouring territories. From all that we know of the capacity of Russian troops and Generals to conduct an experiment in an enemy's country, it appears improbable that so distant a point as Merv would be attacked until the intervening territory had been annexed.

"This last, which would be the alternative method of advance, undoubtedly might be pursued without any serious military or geographical difficulty, or indeed, without any impediment except the cost which it would involve. It is impossible to assume as a matter of certainty that such an enterprise will never be undertaken by Russia. The only security against the prosecution of it which we possess would be its extreme impolicy from a Russian point of view. It would involve long and costly preparations; for the hostility of the Turkoman tribes, though it might be overcome, could not safely be disregarded; and the States of Persia and Afghanistan, if any inde-

pendent force remained to them, would not be likely to acquiesce in an annexation of territory by which their own dominions would be seriously threatened. When acquired, the possession of Merv could only be maintained by operations scarcely inferior in magnitude to those which would be required for its capture. The capture would be of no utility unless it could be maintained at least for some years. During that time all military stores and munition of war, at least, must be conveyed either 800 miles from Krasnovodsk, or across 150 miles of absolute desert from Charjui. It is extremely doubtful whether such a force would be necessary for an enterprise of this character could obtain the bare necessaries of life at such a place as Merv for many months together. Merv would bring to Russia neither revenue, nor subjects, nor security. Save as a basis for a further advance towards India, the permanent occupation of Merv would be a needless and wanton waste both of money and of military force; and there are very few persons who believe that an invasion of India is possible for Russia, or is contemplated by the boldest of Russian statesmen."

"It does not necessarily follow," it was said, because it would be highly impolitic for Russia to take this step, that, therefore, it will not be taken. It has happened before, and may happen again, that the ambition of individuals may succeed in blinding the Government of Russia to its real interest, and urging it forward to a ruinous enterprise. Recent events have made this contingency even more improbable than it was before the war began; but it cannot be dismissed as an impossibility. It is not, however, of a kind to demand any immediate orders from Her Majesty's Government. Many years must elapse before the Russian frontier can be pushed forward by safe and gradual advances as far as Merv. When the course shall have been entered upon of which the conquest of Merv is to be the end, the time will have arrived for declaring how far and how soon the adoption of corresponding military measures may be expedient. But it cannot be said that this enterprise has clearly been undertaken by Russia, until she has established herself upon some territory in the direction of Merv which is admittedly not included within her present frontiers.

"Pending that time, it appears to Her Majesty's Government that any military measures of precaution against the capture of Merv would be inopportune, and might possibly be calamitous. Any action tending to encourage the Turkomans to take up arms or to make hostile preparations against Russia, any supply of arms or money, or money, or the mission of officers to organize the tribes, would not only expose them to the resentment and vengeance of their powerful neighbour, from whom you would be unable to protect them, but also would be inconsistent with the proclaimed policy of Her Majesty's Government."

"This abstinence from aggressive action," it was added, "is by no means incompatible with the duty of maintaining an attitude of due preparation against any dangers that may possibly arise, and strengthening your position by peaceful means as circumstances give you opportunity. It will continue to be a cardinal object of your frontier policy to obtain a friendly influence over the Ruler of Afghanistan—such an influence as legitimately belongs to a powerful but pacific neighbour. Circumstances, upon which it is unnecessary to dwell, have for some years past encouraged the present Amir to hold cheap the friendship of Great Britain, whether as counting it a support which he could command at pleasure, or as esteeming it of little value. Your Excellency has wisely judged that influence over the Afghan Government was not to be secured by showing too much anxiety to regain it. You are fully sensible of the importance attached to this object by Her Majesty's Government, and they place entire reliance on your judgment in the selection of the means by which it may most effectually be obtained."

The value of exploring the approaches to Merv from the west was not, however, to be lost sight of, and there appeared to be no insuperable difficulties in it. It was sufficient at present, therefore, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government to despatch to Merv an intelligent Officer, in company with a Veterinary Surgeon, with a commission to purchase horses for military purposes in India. Captain Napier, who was then in Persia, and had already shown much discretion and ability in his communications with the Turkoman tribes, might, it was suggested, be advantageously employed on this duty, in the course of which he would be able to obtain information on many points which were then matters of speculation.

Her Majesty's Government reserved for another opportunity any observations on that portion of the Government of India letter which related to Persia. Any action which it might be thought necessary to take in reference to the relations between Persia and Russia, especially upon the frontier of the Atrek must manifestly be of a diplomatic, and not of military character. "It will not, therefore, be requisite," it was said in conclusion, "to convey to Your Excellency any instructions upon that head, but I will communicate to you any measures which Her Majesty's Government may determine to pursue through Her Majesty's diplomatic representative at the Persian Court."

Whilst this correspondence was in progress Her Majesty's Minister at Teheran made strong representations* to Her Majesty's Government in the same sense as those submitted by the Government of India. It was not advisable, he added, that Merv should pass into the hands of the Persians, unless as the sole alternative to actual occupation by Russia. "Failing a solution," he said, "of the "Merv question being effected by its transfer for

* Mr. Tylour Thomson to Earl of Derby, No. 113, dated 26th July 1877.

“ the present to Afghanistan, all that remains to be done is, it appears to me, to strengthen our position as far as possible in Khelat, with a view to our being in a position to bring pressure, when needful, upon the Afghan Government, and await the development of events.”

In connection with the above correspondence, Mr. Tylour Thomson was authorised to inform the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs* that Her Majesty's Government were prepared to afford their moral support at St. Petersburg to the protest which the Shah's Government had intimated its readiness to make against the threatened occupation by Russia of Karee Kala and the Upper Atrek valley. The Shah and his Ministers expressed their obligations for the friendly support thus promised in a matter of such vital importance to Persia, but were indisposed to enter into any discussion on the point with Russia, as General Lomakin had withdrawn from Kizil Arvat.

Nothing resulted from the action of either Lord Lytton's Government or that of Her Majesty's Government except the deputation † to Merv of Captain Napier, which was duly ordered. But he has been unable to carry out his journey and has ‡ now definitely abandoned it.

The successful termination of the war with Turkey soon revived Russian activity in the Turkoman country, whilst an increased ill feeling against England and a desire to injure her on her north-west frontier of India appears to have given a larger development to Russian operations in Central Asia than had heretofore been contemplated. The Russian press, as usual, sounded the first aggressive note.

Amongst others the “ Ruski Mir ” § said, in its issue of 31st January 1878,—

“ The anxiety felt in regard to the future does not subside. A diplomatic struggle awaits us, a struggle in which we shall have to defend step by step the results won by heavy sacrifices, and we must now be prepared resolutely to support our just demands. The occupation by our troops of the strategical lines in European Turkey and in Asia Minor, the concentration of a force on the frontiers of Galicia and on the coasts of the Caspian Sea, the equipment of a force in the Turkistan region for an expedition to Central Asia, these we consider in any case as not being superfluous precautionary measures.”

And it again said, on the 29th of May 1878, “ The centre of gravity in the settlement || of the Eastern question as regards England lies not so much in Turkey as in the newly created Indian Empire. Deriving as she does enormous profits from India, England very naturally has views on the adjacent states of Iran, such as Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and Persia. England has long had views on Persia, and she has not disguised the fact, but during the present decade the intentions of England in regard to Persia have become very evident.

NOTE.—The measures necessary to effect this object had already been carried out with marked success by Lord Lytton's Government, under instructions from the Marquis of Salisbury of 28th February 1876.

* Mr. Tylour Thomson to Earl of Derby, 6th August and 6th September 1877.

NOTE.—The most recent information at hand appears to contain evidence of collusion between Russia and Persia in regard to the occupation of the Atrek valley and Akhal country by the former ; and telegrams from Captain Napier, dated 21st and 31st July, state that the Persian Prince Governor of Khorassan had ordered the Boojnord, Koochan, and Deragez Chiefs to furnish supplies and carriage to General Lomakin. According to a telegram of the 15th August 1878, from Mr. Ronald Thomson, this action on the part of the Khorassan authorities was not approved by the Shah, although His Majesty showed great sympathy with Russia, and no anxiety as to her approach.

† Instruction of Government of India to Mr. Tylour Thomson, 13th December 1877.

‡ Mr. R. Thomson to Marquis of Salisbury, 25th July 1878.

§ Foreign Office to India Office, 1st March 1878.

|| Michell's Abstract, No. XX., of 11th June 1878.

“ The despatch of English Officers to Persia and the project of a railway through that country indicate very clearly that England intends to take Persia in hand and to make her a kind of province of the Indian Empire. If England were to succeed even partially in realizing her plan, she would embarrass us in the East still more than she now does.

“ In order to frustrate these intentions, it is necessary for us to take advantage of the community of our interests and those of Persia in Asia in respect to the protection of our frontiers against Turkoman inroads. It is not so long since the Turkomans defeated Persian troops sent to quell the robbers who give Persia no peace. Five Persian infantry battalions and ten cavalry regiments, with one battery, were routed by a numerically equal Turkoman force. This success on the part of the Turkomans induced them to menace our frontier line along the Atrek. A mass of Turkomans, numbering from six to ten thousand, attacked a Russian detachment sent from Krasnovodsk to occupy Kizil Arvat with a view to secure our trade route between Khiva and Krasnovodsk. The attack was beaten off, but it shows the troublesome element in the Turkoman population. Thus we find that Persia and Russia are equally interested in reducing the Turkomans to obedience. Our object is the protection of our frontier line against this nomad people. This can be effected by the occupation of Merv, the centre of the Turkoman camp; and we ought, at the same time, to occupy Herat as a counterpoise to the influence of England in Baluchistan. Both these objects can be better achieved by an advance on those two points through Persia. The road from Astrabad to Meshed has been minutely explored by our countryman, Mr. Ogorodnikof.

“ The road to Afghanistan through Persia is undoubtedly the shortest and the most convenient one, at the same time its adoption for a military advance involves demonstrative operations on the north, *i.e.*, on our Turkoman frontier. If we confined ourselves at first to the occupation of Herat, this would not require the employment of much force on our part. The feasibility of this plan was pointed out by General Khrulëf in his memorandum.* We must not forget that when General Khrulëf drew up his memorandum we had not established ourselves in Turkistan. He was therefore obliged to insist on the occupation of certain points on the Jaxartes. The position of affairs is now different. We stand on a firm footing in Turkistan, therefore the realization of General Khrulëf's scheme, which he put forward with such great confidence, should doubtless now be so much easier.

“ It is argued by advancing on Herat through Persia, operating in favour of the latter, we should place ourselves in hostile relations with Afghanistan.

* A similar memorandum was drawn up at the time by Mr. Tchikhachef (during the Crimean War).

But this is hardly sound argument, for whether we advanced on Herat through Persia or from elsewhere, our relations with Afghanistan would be the same. But having occupied Herat we should not give up that place to Persia in recompense for her co-operation. Persia would find her recompense in the fact that her frontier, as well as ours, was safeguarded against the inroads of Turkomans, who scatter every Persian force sent out against them.

“ While pointing out the feasibility and expediency of an advance on Merv and Herat through Persia, we do not insist on the absolute necessity of marching our forces at once to those places; we should take every advantage of this practicability in the event only of a war with England.”

“ The Tiflis correspondent of a Hamburg journal, writing in April 1878,* says that General von Kauffmann had submitted a memorandum to the Imperial Government on the subject of an expedition to India, in which he had proposed in the first place the augmentation of the Turkistan forces, and in the second place the organization of a militia to be composed of Cossacks, Kirghiz, and Yamud and other Turkomans, numbering 12,000 men, for the purpose of making up the complements in the Russian *cadres*. Another recommendation was the fortifying and enlargement of Krasnovodsk as a military naval station, making it the chief depôt and base of a Russian expeditionary force. According to the same correspondent, the Russian Government acted at once on the above recommendations; the garrisons in Turkistan were strengthened; General von Kauffmann was provided with funds for the organization of the militia, and Krasnovodsk was so changed in the course of the year that travellers were surprised to see the great alterations that had been made. Five commissions composed of Staff Officers were simultaneously despatched in various directions between the Russian and Anglo-Indian dominions, the results of which have been a better acquaintance with many unknown parts of Central Asia, and a circumstantial plan of military operations. This plan was approved by the Russian Minister for War in the autumn of the year 1877, and it is on the strength of this plan that all those movements are being made in Central Asia which have been noticeable of late.”

About this time Acting Consul Lyall reported † that the troops composing the Russian army lately employed in Armenia were being mostly withdrawn, and that a force (12,000 men) had been despatched from Krasnovodsk, on the east shore of the Caspian, consisting of troops from Astrakan and the Caspian Provinces, with a view of occupying Merv. Ten mountain batteries were also said to be preparing in the arsenal at Tiflis for reinforcing the Merv expedition.

Consul Ricketts also received from M. Chapedelaine, his French colleague at Tiflis (31st

* Michell's Abstract, No. XV., 21st May 1878.

NOTE.—This statement is corroborated by information in possession of this Department, which is not available for a Note of this nature, embodying General Kauffmann's opinion of the probabilities of an impending struggle in Turkistan, and the necessity of preserving Russian interests on the Oxus, as against those of that “perfidious neutral State,” the East India Government. General Kauffmann's present scheme appears to be to affect belief that Bokhara has been intriguing against Russia; that she has been instigated to do this by Shere Ali under British influence; and that this pretended fact justifies interference with Cabul, as well as decided movements of troops “to protect Russian interests on the Oxus.”

† Acting Consul Lyall, Tiflis, to Earl of Derby, 16th March and 3rd April 1878.

Foreign Office to India Office, 23rd April and 3rd May 1878.

* Consul Ricketts to Marquis of Salisbury, 1st May 1878.

Foreign Office to India Office, 30th May 1878.

† Foreign Office to India Office, 4th June 1878, enclosing Michell's Memorandum of 31st May 1878.

‡ Acting Consul Lyall to Marquis of Salisbury, 12th April 1878.

Foreign Office to India Office, 20th May 1878.

§ Mr. Ronald Thomson to Marquis of Salisbury, 29th April 1878.

March 1878), a letter corroborating these rumours.* He wrote,—

“ Je ne sais si Sayal a prévenu votre Gouvernement qu'on prépare ici une expédition sur Merv au retour du Grand Duc qui part aujourd'hui pour Petersbourg.”

Simultaneously, by an order of the Russian Minister of War,† dated the 3rd of May 1878, eight battalions of infantry reserve were to be formed for the reinforcement of the Russian troops of the Turkistan military district.

Acting Consul Lyall reported also‡ that General Loris Melikoff, Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasian Army, reached Tiflis on the 10th of April from Kars, *en route* for St. Petersburg, where he attended a grand council of war, held for the purpose of discussing the feasibility of sending a force of 20,000 men from the Caucasus, *vid* Krasnovodsk, to the Atrek valley towards Merv, to effect a junction there, and to co-operate with an army from Turkistan directed against the North-West frontier of India. The Grand Duke Michael left for St. Petersburg apparently on the same errand.

About this time Mr. Ronald Thomson sent from Teheran a copy of one of several documents of doubtful authority§ which had been forwarded from St. Petersburg to the Russian legation at Teheran, bearing upon the policy which Russia has resolved upon pursuing in the East in respect to England and India. This paper was, it is said, read by Count Milutine, the Russian Minister of War, before the members of the Council of State of the Emperor at St. Petersburg. Its general tenor bore on the necessity of restraining the greed and rapacity of the “Despot of the Seas;” it said that the English exchequer was enriched by 20,000,000*l.* a year from the revenues of India, and that the entire gain to Great Britain from the whole of India was 6½ millions sterling a day; that if the English were expelled from India, tumults would ensue in the mother country which would subvert the Government and extinguish the political influence possessed by England with other nations; it was not intended, however, that Russia should seize India herself, but that the English should be dispossessed of it, and the country restored to its former possessors, inasmuch as the people of India would be in revolt and rebellion when they hear that Russian troops are marching towards their country to restore to them their freedom. Another factor in the successful accomplishment of this plan would be an understanding with the Afghans, who eagerly await the opportunity which the approach of an ally would give them to avenge the past on England. The movement of Russian troops towards India would compel the English to detach a large portion of her military force to defend her territory, and thus her power would be weakened in Europe. The Council of State unanimously resolved upon the adoption of the suggestions contained in this paper.

Mr. Ronald Thomson was informed that other papers bearing on the same subject had been transmitted to the Russian Legation during 1877-78, referring specially to letters which had passed between the Russians and Afghans, and the understanding said to have been arrived at with the Ruler of Cabul; bearing reference also to communications which are said to have taken place between the Russians and influential natives of India, and the channel through which these communications with India have been held;—Afghan agents and Russian Armenian priests having been employed for that purpose.

Mr. Ronald Thomson was unable to say what reliance could be placed on the statements thus made to him by his informant, and they must therefore be received with great caution, although they are corroborated in some degree from other independent sources.

The increased military activity of Russia in Turkistan above indicated was confirmed by a report from Cabul sources, which* ran as follows:—

“Shahghasi Sherdil Khan, the Nazim of Turkistan, wrote a letter to the Amir, and communicated the following particulars to him:—

“‘Mirza Salahuddin, whom I deputed towards Samarkand and Tashkend to collect news from those directions, has returned and made a statement to the effect that the Russians intend to induce Sirdar Abdul Rahman Khan to submit to them a petition setting forth that he has been putting up there under the protection of the Russian Government for a long time; that he has often petitioned them to help him in securing the restitution of his ancestral territory from the Amir of Cabul, but his prayer has not been acceded to; and that he has now heard that the Russians are preparing to fight against the British Government; that they have sent envoys to wait upon the Amir to request him to allow passage through his country to the Russian troops going to India and returning therefrom, should a necessity arise for such a passage; and that such being the case, he offered his services, in case His Highness refuses to grant the request of the Russian Government, to capture Balkh with a small assistance from the Czar, and then to subdue the whole of Afghanistan, which is not a difficult task; the Russian officer Ibramoff asserts that, should the Amir refuse to comply with the requests of the Russian Government, the petition of the Sirdar will be forwarded to His Highness to terrify him. This communication from the Shahghasi frightened the Amir.’”

At this time a general order issued by General Kauffman† to the Turkestan forces appeared in the “Turkestan Gazette,” relative to the formation, as a preliminary measure, of three “operating columns” under instructions received from the Minister for War.

The principal column was to be formed at Samar-

* Peshawur News Letter, 13th May 1878.
Government of India to Secretary of State,
17th June 1878.

† Michell's Report, 19th July 1878.
Order dated 14th May 1878.

NOTE.—This Intelligence Department of the War Office calculates the strength of the main, or Samarcand, column to be about 12,000 men, and that of the second and third flank columns to be about 1,700 men each. Thus there are three columns in movement, in addition to the force operating against the Akhal country, which may be calculated at about 4,000 men; in other words, there are perhaps 20,000 Russian troops marching at this moment on strategic points in the Turkoman country, and on the Oxus.

* This column, as said before, amounts to about 12,000 men.

cand, a second at Marghilan (in Ferghana), and a third at Fort Petro-Alexandrofsk (on the Oxus).

The General Order directs that the principal column,* under the command of Major-General Trotski shall be composed of the 3rd, 5th, and 6th Turkistan Battalions, and of the "Composite" Battalion, also of the 3rd W. Siberian Battalion of the line, two companies of the 17th Turkistan Battalion of the line, the whole of the Turkistan Rifle Brigade, and the company of Sappers, the 4th Regiment of Orenburg-Ural Cossacks in full complement; also

Four sotnias of the 2nd Orenburg Regiment, Cossacks.

Four sotnias of the 3rd Orenburg Regiment, Cossacks.

Four sotnias of the 1st Siberian Regiment, Cossacks.

Two sotnias of the 5th Composite Regiment, Cossacks.

The 1st and 2nd Batteries and half battery.

The 2nd Battery of the Turkistan Artillery Brigade.

The "Field Exercise" Battery, the 1st and 5th Orenburg Mounted Cossack Batteries, and a Rocket Battery.

† This column is believed to amount to about 1,700 men.

The Ferghana column† shall be composed of six Rifle companies, two "Composite" Cossack sotnias, six guns of the Turkistan Mountain Battery of Horse Artillery, and a "division" of the Rocket Battery; this column to be under the command of Major-General Abramof.

‡ Ditto, ditto.

The Oxus column,‡ under the command of Colonel Grotenhelm, shall be composed of six companies, two sotnias, and four guns.

The order of the day directs that the first or main column shall be assembled at Samarcand, to proceed from thence *en échelons* to Djam, and further according to given orders.

The second column, organized at Marghilan, was to proceed through Vadil to the valley of the Kizil-Su, and further according to orders.

The third column, formed at Petro-Alexandrofsk, marching along the bank of the Oxus, was to proceed to Chardjui and from there according to given orders.

NOTE.—A fourth column, referred to in page 35, is also operating in the Akhal country. This column is believed to amount to about 4,000 men. According to information received at Calcutta, there are, indeed, two separate columns operating against Kizil Arvat ("Homeward Mail," 10th August 1878), one from Chikislar, and one from Krasnovodsk.

The troops were to be provided with two pairs of boots for each man, felt cloths or blankets (*koshma*), $1\frac{1}{2}$ yards square, for each man, and with eight days rations of biscuits.

"A separate order will be issued in reference to the time for the organization (formation) and departure of the columns when necessity may arise."

Then follow minute instructions in reference to commissariat and ambulance arrangements, to clothing, transport, selection of ground for camps and bivouacs, sanitary precautions, &c.

The Tashkend correspondent of the "Moscow Gazette" (No. 163, June 27th, O.S.) writing under

date the 30th May (11th June) announced the arrival of General Stoletof,* saying that, on his appearance, things seem to have been expedited to the great relief of the general anxiety, and in happy realization of the earnest expectations of the troops. The town council met on the 22nd May (O.S.) to settle questions relative to the hire of carts, &c., and, shortly after, a general order was issued relative to the appointment of a commissariat staff, &c.

The same correspondent wrote that the Tashkend artillery park had already marched out, that on the 30th May (O.S.) the Engineer park was to leave Tashkend, that on the 1st (13th) June the troops were to have marched out *en échelon*, and that the staff was to have taken its departure on the 11th of June (O.S.).

The "Moscow Gazette," in an exulting tone, has no doubt as to the destination of the troops. They are evidently to march a very great distance. It is glad to see that the expedition has not been put off, and that 20,000 men are already on their way to the desired goal.

The "Exchange Gazette," which is the only Russian paper in favour of peace, which is anti-Pan-Slav, and which sees absolute ruin to Russia in a war with England, brings the "Moscow Gazette" severely to task for ignoring the date of the General Order by General Kaufmann, and for persuading its readers to believe that, notwithstanding the results of the Conference at Berlin, which it would not accept, the Turkistan army is even yet marching to India.

The "Novoyé Vremia,"† another Chauvinist paper, reproducing the article in the "Moscow Gazette," observes that a continuous advance southwards of the columns recently formed, is the best way to cool the martial ardour of England. Judging by the General Order, this paper says that the force now in the field numbers 20,000 men, or thereabouts, who are assembled at Djam, at Charjui, and in the valley of the Kizil-Su. "From here" it is 10 or 15 days' march to Afghanistan. If circumstances shall require the despatch of the main forces after these columns, these main forces can be made up of 30,000 men. "Thus," concludes the "Novoyé Vremia," "we can march 50,000 men from Central Asia, as many almost as the English can muster in India of their own English troops."

"Turkistan will be held and protected by these 20,000 newly formed troops which have already assembled in Western Siberia."

Consul Churchill heard, on his arrival at Afshe-
ran‡ (Baku), on the 24th of May 1878, that 24 trans-
ports were being got ready at Nijni Novgorod to
convey troops, consisting principally of cavalry, to
the Caspian. The destination of these troops was
unknown, nor was their numerical force mentioned,
but Krasnovodsk and Asterabad were hinted at. At
the mouth of the Volga, Mr. Churchill was assured

* An officer of varied and long experience, trans-Caspian, and well acquainted with Persia, Turkistan, &c.

† No. 837, 29th June 1878

‡ Consul Churchill to Marquis of Salisbury, 12th June 1878.
Foreign Office to India Office, 22nd June 1878.

that the expedition down the Volga was to consist of 120,000 (?) men, who were to be concentrated to begin with at Petrovsk, and were subsequently to proceed to Krasnovodsk, with a view to menacing our Indian frontier by the Atrek. It was further stated that General Lomakin, who is in command at Krasnovodsk, was to be superseded. Troops were already in readiness at the mouth of the Volga, and the steamer that brought Mr. Churchill there was immediately commissioned to carry 500 men to Petrovsk. Mr. Churchill found the people in Russia under the impression that the mere menace of an expedition against India would suffice to create a perturbation in the minds of the natives of India, highly detrimental to our interests.

* Viceroy to Secretary of State, 1st July 1878.

NOTE.—By the treaty between Russia and Bokhara of the 28th of September 1873, Art. IV. the Russians have the following rights:—

“Art. IV. The Russians have the right to establish piers and storehouses wherever it may be deemed necessary and convenient upon the *Bokharian banks* of the Oxus. The final selection of these localities rests with the supreme Russian authorities in Central Asia.

“Art. VIII. Russian merchants will be entitled to establish warehouses in all Bokharse towns.”

Thus it will be seen that they have no Treaty right to establish *cantonments* at Sherabad, Karki, Kilif, or elsewhere, and are acting, if this report from India be true, on the principle that might is right. Karki is on the Bokharian side of the Oxus outside Afghan limits. Kilif is on the Bokharian banks of the Oxus, over which, at that point, is a ferry into Balkh. Khoja Saleh forms the north-western corner of the Afghan boundary, and is expressly included within it by the final agreement in 1873 between Russia and England. The establishment of a military cantonment at or near either of the two latter places may, therefore, be said to directly overawe Afghan territory. According to a telegram from India, dated 30th July 1878, General Kaufmann himself was reported to have reached Karki with troops.

† Telegram from Mr. R. Thomson to Marquis of Salisbury, 7th July 1878.

Foreign Office to India Office, 7th July.

‡ Telegram from Mr. R. Thomson, 18th July 1878.

Foreign Office to India Office, 20th July.

§ Government of India to Secretary of State, No. 41, Secret, 24th June 1878.

|| No. 18, dated 7th June 1878.

No. 19, dated 12th June 1878.

No. 20, dated 16th June 1878.

¶ Dated 5th, 11th, and 13th June 1878.

A report was at this time* received in India from a Peshawur merchant, who had derived special information from his firm at Bokhara, that a Russian force, said to amount to 30,000 men, had arrived at Karshi (in Bokhara territory). A letter from Cabul reported that, on 13th June, a new agent from Russia had reached Cabul, and informed the Ameer that the Russians were about to establish cantonments at Sherabad, and at the ferries of Kilif and Karki on the Oxus; the cantonment at Kilif would bring Russia into immediate contact with Afghanistan.

This information was sent to the Foreign Office on the 15th of July, with a suggestion on the part of Viscount Cranbrook, that the information thus given should be “forwarded at once to the Marquis of Salisbury during his stay at Berlin, for any inquiry or action which his lordship may deem “desirable.” No reply has as yet come to this letter.

A subsequent telegram from the Chargé d’Affaires† at Teheran informed us of the landing of five regiments of infantry and two guns (as well as the arrival of 1,000 Cossacks by land from the north) at Chikislar, on the south coast of the Caspian, destination supposed to be Akhal and Merv. This news was confirmed in a subsequent telegram,‡ and the force was stated to be advancing on Bayat Hadji to attack the Akhals. The Yemoot Turkomans were said to be assisting the Russians in the matter of transport.

The information above embodied has been generally corroborated in news letters received by the Government of India from Cabul, in regard to which Lord Lytton’s Government§ said,—

“On the 7th and 19th of this month we telegraphed to your Lordship that rumours had reached us from various sources of preparations by the Russians in Turkistan for movements, political and military, toward Afghanistan. We now transmit the more important diaries|| and letters¶ which conveyed these reports.

“The information which we have thus obtained is necessarily incapable of precise verification. But it has been received from persons well placed for

collecting public news from across our North-West Frontier; and, as the different rumours corroborate each other, they produce, taken together, the impression that they have some authentic foundation in fact. We have, therefore, resolved that we should forward these papers to your Lordship, in order that the intelligence, *quantum valeat*, may be used in any way that Her Majesty's Government may think desirable."

The news letters in question contained the following information:—

"1. Shahghassi Sherdil Khan* has reported to the Amir that, in accordance with his commands, he deputed an agent to Tashkend and Bokhara, to ascertain what was going on in those parts, and that the following information has been received,—

"(a) The Russians are pushing on the road making between Khiva and the banks of the Oxus, towards Charjui and Karki, with great activity.

"(b) In Tashkend it is rumoured that a force of 80,000 men is being mobilized, and that a portion of it will move *viâ* Khiva, and the remainder *viâ* Tashkend, to Charjui and Karki,—the two lines of route above mentioned being used in order to facilitate the procuring of supplies.

"(c) The Russians have, with great craftiness, ascertained throughout Bokhara and Khiva the probable amount of supplies and carriage that can be procured.

"(d) The full-powered minister ('Wuzir Mukhtar') who has been appointed by the Russians to proceed to Cabul will first go to Tashkend, and, after consultation with Governor General Kauffmann, will proceed to Cabul.

"(e) In Tashkend it was openly stated that the Russians say that, if the Amir of Cabul does not do what they want, they will nevertheless, on a suitable opportunity occurring, proceed with their arrangements for approaching India, and that they are not dependent on the Amir at all.

"(f) The Russian officials are very attentive to Sirdar Abdur Rahman Khan in these days.

Another communication, dated the 13th of June 1878, from the same source, says,—

"Bakhtiar Khan has just sent me a report that the Shahghassi has written to the Amir to say that the road making between Khiva and Karki, *viâ* Charjui, is being carried on with great activity, and that a rumour has come from Tashkend that the Russians are mobilizing a force of 30,000 men, part of which will proceed *viâ* Khiva and part by Tashkend, to be concentrated at Charjui. He also adds that the Russian Envoy will proceed to Tashkend, and, after consultation with Kauffmann, will be sent to Cabul.

"I cannot, of course, say whether this information is to be relied upon or not. Doubtless, if there is any truth about the intention to mass troops on the Oxus, your Lordship will have heard

* Peshawur Diary by Major Cavagnari, No. 20, of 16th June 1878.

NOTE.—Abdul Rahman Khan, Barakzai, is the eldest son of the late Mahomed Afzal Khan, elder half brother of Shere Ali. In 1864 he espoused his father's cause against the present Amir, and was placed by his father in charge of Afghan Turkistan. He displayed stubborn opposition to Shere Ali, but eventually fled to Bokhara, where he married a daughter of the Mir of that country. Abdul Rahman shortly afterwards defeated Shere Ali's troops in Afghan Turkistan, and entered Cabul victorious on 24th February 1866. His father was subsequently imprisoned and murdered by Shere Ali, whose fortunes in 1868 came into the ascendant, and Abdul Rahman fled in 1869 to Meshed, with his uncle, Azim Khan, and thence to Bokhara, where he mixed himself up in intrigues with the ex-Mir of Badakhshan, who had been deposed by Shere Ali. In March 1870, he left Bokhara for Samarcand, proceeding thence to Tashkend, where he was well received by General Kauffmann in May 1870. He endeavoured to induce the Russians to give him troops to reconquer Afghan Turkistan; he failed, and has since resided at Samarcand, in receipt of an allowance from the Russian Government, said to amount to 25,000 roubles (4,000*l.*) a year. There is strong sympathy in Afghanistan, specially in Afghan Turkistan, in favour of Abdul Rahman Khan, and he has repeatedly begged the Russian authorities to allow him to seize and hold Balkh. They have apparently, up to the present moment, refused his request, but keep him, no doubt, for future contingencies.

about it. Munshi Bakhtiar Khan is quite capable of anything, and it would be by no means impossible for him, in the interests of the Ameer, to invent stories of the kind, with the view to alarming the Government as to unusual activity on the part of the Russians.

“At the same time, one would think that he is too sharp a man to report, as facts, matters which but a very short space of time must certainly disprove, if they are only inventions.”

Time alone will show whether Russian military activity in Turkistan is to receive further development. There are at present no adequate means of judging whether the columns organized by General Kauffmann for aggressive purposes will, since the peaceful termination of the Berlin Congress, be relegated or not to peace duties. Lord Augustus Loftus, writing from St. Petersburg, believes* that the military expedition against the Indian frontier was prepared rather as a demonstration than with any more precise object. He is inclined to believe that Herat would have been the first point in view, and that the advance on that fortress would have been made simultaneously from Charjui, and through the valley of the Atrek. But since the meeting of the Congress, he adds, and the more pacific aspect of affairs, these military preparations appear to have been entirely suspended.

The latest report received from Teheran† is to the effect that the Persian Foreign Minister has informed the British Chargé d’Affaires there that, as has been previously attached to this Note, the Persian Government would not move in regard to any advance on the Akhal country; and that the Shah would prefer the Russians to the Akhal Turkomans as neighbours. The latest news received from Persia states that a large column from Krasnovodsk reached Igdalik, on the route to Kizil Arvat, about the 18th of July 1878.

The “Times” of the 11th August 1878 contains a statement from Berlin to the following effect:—

“The Russian expedition in Central Asia aims at the occupation of the six minor Khanates between the southern course of the Amu-Darya and Hindoo Koosh, viz., Kara Zin, Shughnal, Darwaz, Sarikol, and Wakhan. Of these Khanates, the three first are independent; Sarikol belongs to Kashgar, while the Wakhan Emir is a feudatory of the Ameer of Afghanistan. The occupation of Wakhan will reduce the distance between the Russian and English frontiers to about 325 miles. From Wakhan there are roads to India over the intervening plateau, easily passable in summer, but not so in winter.”

If there be any truth in this statement, it appears to show that the Russians are, in addition to their operations in Turkistan, making a forward movement towards Budakshan and Chitral‡ from the direction of Kokand. The occupation of Wakhan would, of course, be in direct violation of the agreement of 1873.

* Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, 3rd July 1878.

† Mr. Ronald Thomson to Marquis of Salisbury, 22nd July 1878.

‡ Foreign Office to India Office, 23rd July 1878.

‡ A separate paper will be submitted on this point.

SECRET MISSIONS OF RUSSIAN OFFICERS.— Whilst the military movements above sketched were being actively pushed on, information reached Her Majesty's Government from various sources of secret missions of Russian officers to Persia, the Attrek country, and Afghan Turkistan.

It will be remembered that in 1873 a Russian adventurer named Paschino visited India, after being ejected from the Russian Foreign Office. He is believed to have visited Cabul in 1868, returning to Russia *via* Candahar and Yezd.

When M. Paschino started for India in 1873, *via* Trieste, he assumed at Alexandria the disguise of an Arab merchant, and the name of Shaikh-Mohamed-Ayad-Effendi-Ben-Hassan Beg. In this disguise he travelled about India, when, according to statements made by him, two other Russians, a M. Alexandrof and a M. Kostenko (besides others whose names he affected not to know), were "spying" in the country, and entering into secret relations with the Ameer of Cabul, and certain feudatory Chiefs of India, who, according to him, had given promises of friendship to the Russian Government.

On the occasion of this visit to India, M. Paschino professed an admiration for the English and their Government, and made a proffer of his services to the Government of the Punjab, which services were wisely rejected. M. Paschino subsequently, on his return to Russia, gave an account* of this visit to India, in which he said that he penetrated to Chamba, whence he proceeded to Cabul *via* Lahore.

In December 1874 this adventurer once more appeared in India, whereupon the Government of India, having in view the character of that person as revealed by his previous conduct, "instructed the Government of the Punjab to convey a warning to him, under Regulation VIII. of 1873, that he would not be permitted to cross the British frontier," and "intimated to the Maharajah of Cashmere a wish that M. Paschino should not be allowed to pass through His Highness's territories."

M. Paschino was informed of this officially, and in consequence thereof left Lahore for Bombay on the 9th March 1875. Thence he proceeded to Mandalay, where he obtained an interview with the King of Burmah, and is said to have "discussed in a hostile spirit" the relations between England and Russia in Central Asia. M. Paschino has since delivered at St. Petersburg addresses† on India, Burmah, and the countries which he has traversed, some of which have been published in Russian papers. He has also propounded wild schemes of invasion of India from the Oxus side "with no fewer than 150,000 men."

He says,—‡

"The road from Merv to Herat is the only one leading into the heart of Russia. This road is to be

* Abstract, No. 99, 28th May 1874.

† Michell's Abstract, No. VII., 1877.

‡ Abstract, VII., 1878.

taken by a Russian force transported from Astrakhan and Baku to Krasnovodsk. At Herat he recommends a division of the army into two columns, one of which should proceed to Candahar and to the Bolan Pass, whence it should operate against Kotri, the terminus of the railway from Kurrachee.

“ Whilst making this diversion the other column should, in his opinion, march from Herat to Cabul, Jellallabad, the Khaiber, and Peshawur.

“ Another, or third Russian column, should, at the same time, advance from Russian Turkestan, through Chitral, to the rear of the above positions. In order to cut off Peshawur from attack, this column should occupy Nowshera.

“ The presence of the Russians,” he adds, “ would suffice to raise the population of the Punjab; and Shere Ali, the future friend of Russia, would effectively operate in gaining over the people. For his co-operation the Ameer of Cabul should be recompensed with the Punjab, while the Russians should retain Badakhshan and Kundrez.

“ ‘ One successful stroke will suffice to raise a rebellion from the northern boundaries of the Punjab to Cape Comorin. Burmah will seize the opportunity to recover her lost possessions and the ports in the Gulf of Bengal. In alliance with Siam, Burmah might not only gain possession of the whole of the western coast of the Malayan Peninsula, but also of the island on which Singapore is situated.’ ”

“ For the purpose of this operation, however, ‘ no fewer than 150,000 men should be sent forward, ‘ making allowances for sickness, mortality, and for ‘ garrisons, &c. These troops should be headed by ‘ a Grand Duke, whose name would have an ‘ immense influence in India;’ and the expense involved is estimated by M. Paschino at ‘ about one million of roubles.’ ”

Such is the scheme propounded by this adventurer; it is only mentioned as showing the sort of propositions with which even sensible Russians have been attracted during the last few years.

Many other reports reached the Government of India last year of Russian officers travelling in Cabul, in Khelat, and in India, but none are sufficiently verified to justify notice in this Note.

It was not until the commencement of this year that authentic information came to hand of the movements of Russian agents in Persia, Afghan Turkistan, and elsewhere simultaneously with the movements of Russian expeditions in Turkistan.

Consul Ricketts reported* in January that General Franchini had just returned to Tiflis from a special mission to Teheran, whither he had taken 200,000*l.* in coin; he was replaced there by Colonel Zelenoy, a Russian officer of Engineers of some repute. It is not clear that Franchini's journey had any other object than that of inducing the Persian Government to take up arms against Turkey,

* Consul Ricketts to Earl of Derby, Tiflis, 27th January 1878.

Foreign Office to India Office, 7th and 22nd March 1878.

or at any rate to preserve a strict neutrality during the war. The Persian Foreign Minister, when subsequently questioned on the subject, affected, as usual, a profound ignorance of the whole matter.

"A number of Russian officers," added Consul Ricketts,* "are engaged on a survey of the north of Persia, and the sights taken are being forwarded to Tiflis, where a map of those parts is now in course of construction."

A Cabul news letter,† of 26th February, reported that the Ameer of Cabul had learnt from the Hakim of Ladwa that three Russian travellers had crossed into his district from Charjui, "with the intention of constructing a railway and telegraph line in the direction of Maimena," and that Shere Ali had ordered every assistance to be afforded to them.

A Peshawur news report of the 17th March says that the Russian agent then at Cabul was a Persian; that he had brought a proposition from the Russians "to exchange Samarkund, Bokhara, and Khokand "for Herat," and that a second emissary from the Russian Government now at Tashkend was on his way to Cabul, but had been detained in Turkistan on account of the snow. A similar report of the 26th April said that the Ameer of Cabul had received another letter from General Kauffmann giving details of the Russian successes in Turkey. Another news letter says,—‡

"It is reported § that a new Envoy from Russia arrived at Cabul a short time ago, and that the Amir has more than once allowed him long interviews. The only courtiers of the Cabul durbars present at these interviews were Sardar Shere Ali Khan, Kandhari, General Daud Shah, and the Mustaufi. It is said that the Envoy has brought letters from his Government to the address of the Amir, and that he has given many assurances and promises to His Highness. The Amir is reported to have been affected by the cunning discourse of the Envoy, and to have proposed to depute an agent to Russia to go with the Russian emissary who had been putting up at Cabul for some time before the arrival of the new Envoy. His Highness intends to send his replies to messages from Russia by this agent.

"The Amir is again active in making warlike preparations, and His Highness often personally inspects the gun and musket manufactories.

"The Russian Envoy who recently arrived at Cabul mentioned to Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, the eldest son of the Amir, that it was the desire of the Russian Government that his father should conclude a new treaty with them, whereby the differences which have arisen between him and the Shah of Persia might be removed."

In April, the British Ambassador at Rome|| informed Her Majesty's Government that a Russian Colonel and ten other Engineer Officers of lower rank had arrived at Rome on the evening of the 17th of that month, *en route* for Naples; here they were met by two American officers; some of the party

* Consul Ricketts, 27th January 1878.

† Telegram from Viceroy, 18th April 1878.

‡ 30th April 1878.
Government of India to Secretary of State,
17th June 1878.

§ Government of India to Secretary of State, No. 39, Secret, 17th June 1878.

|| Sir A. Paget to Marquis of Salisbury,
23rd April 1878.
Foreign Office to India Office, 18th and
30th April 1878

* Mr. Ronald Thomson to Marquis of Salisbury, 4th June 1878.

† War Office to India Office, 4th May 1878.

‡ Foreign Office to India Office, 14th May 1878.

§ Mr. Wyndham to Marquis of Salisbury, 1st and 2nd May 1878.
Foreign Office to India Office, 20th May 1878.

|| Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, 1st May 1878.
Foreign Office to India Office, 11th May 1878.

¶ Consul Churchill to Marquis of Salisbury, 12th June 1878.
Foreign Office to India Office, 22nd June 1878.

** Mr. Ronald Thomson to Marquis of Salisbury, 4th May 1878.
Foreign Office to India Office, 9th May 1878.

†† Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury. Foreign Office to India Office, 19th July 1878.

‡‡ Mr. Michel's Memorandum.
Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, 12th April 1878.
Foreign Office to India Office, 22nd April 1878.

were to go to Alexandria direct, and the remainder, *vid* the Piræus, to the same place. Their ultimate destination was believed to be Suez and the Red Sea, with a view of re-entering Russia by Persia. Nothing was, however, known * at Teheran of their movements. None of these officers were to appear as Russians; they were to travel under fictitious names, such as Lindermann, Plessenorg, Clark, Wilson, and Markinworth. The Russian Colonel proceeded † to Genoa on the 27th idem to receive 5,000 Vetterli rifles which were said to have been consigned to Alexandria; two American vessels were reported to be waiting in the Piræus to convey the party onwards to Aden, Perim, and the Persian Gulf. On due inquiry being made, however, by Sir A. Paget, no practical corroboration ‡ could be obtained either of the presence of the American vessels or the shipment of the rifles. The departure of the officers was, nevertheless, a fact; and moreover Her Majesty's Chargés d'Affaires § at Athens reported that three additional Russian officers were about to leave Athens for Syra, *en route* to Smyrna, having taken the fictitious names of Count Ermes, M. De Berg, and Prince Altenberg.

About this period, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg || learnt from a secret source that a Russian trading caravan was to start from Asterabad to Khorassan, to which was to be attached a Russian Colonel of Staff and a military topographer, both disguised as traders, but entrusted with the duty of surveying roads. This report was confirmed by a report from Consul Churchill, ¶ who learned, during his visit to Afsheran, that about the 20th of May 1878 two Russian officers of rank reached Baku, from St. Petersburg, and immediately proceeded, in a despatch boat, in the direction of Asterabad. Their mission was secret; they travelled in plain clothes; and one of the officers belonged to the Topographical Department. No later information connected with the movements of these officers has as yet reached this Office.

It was further reported** from Teheran that M. Bakouline, the Russian Consul at Asterabad, was about to proceed to Khorassan, ostensibly on Consular business, but really with the object of visiting Kooshan and the Akhal border. A later report shows that the Consul had reached Meshed, for the special purpose of watching Captain Napier's movements.††

Whilst these various movements of Russian officers were in full progress, another important step was taken by the Russian Government, in the spirit, it is presumed, of the general plan of active operations in Central Asia, already noticed. This was no less than the deputation of General Tcherniaieff on a special mission of importance to the "tribes of the Indian frontier."††† This officer, after being received in special audience by the Emperor on the 12th of March 1878, left for the Caucasus, *en route* for Krasnovodsk, accompanied by Colonel

Skobeloff. But he had not started long before he was "suddenly recalled" on account* of "some change in the operations against "British India." Lord Augustus Loftus assumes that General Tchernaiëff's † mission was to take command of the intended expedition against Herat, and he attributes his recall to the more pacific aspect of affairs and the entire suspension of military preparations on the part of the Russian authorities. But this assumption is somewhat weakened by the report ‡ that General Melikoff (see page 31 of this Note) has been nominated to succeed General Kauffmann as Governor General of Turkistan. Reports recently received from Afghan sources § seem to point to Tchernaiëff's original destination having been Cabul, charged with an important mission from the Emperor.

Captain Cavagnari reports || that "the Russian "agent now at Cabul has informed the Amir that "a European Russian Envoy, with full powers, and "equal in rank to the Governor General of Russian "Turkistan, will shortly visit Cabul to discuss and "arrange the different matters between the two "Governments. The Amir's first impulse was to "send a special message to the Governor General "at Tashkend, saying that it would be inconvenient for a European officer to come to Cabul; "but, before the Amir did anything, a letter was "received by him from Kauffmann, corroborating "the agent's statement, and adding that the "Envoy must be received by the Amir at Cabul, "as he has been sent by the express commands of "the Emperor." He also encloses copy of an intercepted letter which speaks of a selected Russian officer of great experience in Turkistan about to be sent as Envoy to Afghanistan.

"If there is any truth in the rumour," he says, "I imagine that it principally depends on whether there is war between us and Russia, whether the Russian authorities will really carry out this intention to send a European Envoy to Cabul or to other parts of Afghanistan; and that, if war does not break out, they will hold back their hand for the present, and deny (if asked) that they ever contemplated such interference in Afghanistan, which has already been declared to be beyond the sphere of their legitimate action. Under all circumstances, I think that they have succeeded in frightening the Amir, and have, to some extent, been playing our game for us.

"Bakhtiar Khan reports that the Ameer has written to the Russian authorities at Samarkand, begging them not to depute a Russian officer, and putting forward his old excuses about the danger they would be exposed to, owing to the fanatical and uncivilized character of the Afghans, &c., &c. He offered to send Shahghassi Sherdil Khan, if necessary, to Samarkand; and he pointed out that he must deliberate with his councillors and the Chiefs of the country on the various proposals the Russians have made before he can give a de-

* Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, 11th May 1878.

Foreign Office to India Office, 4th June 1878.

† Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, 3rd July 1878.

Foreign Office to India Office, 17th July 1878.

‡ Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, 3rd July 1878.

§ Government of India to Secretary of State, No. 41, Secret, 24th June 1878.

|| Letter, Peshawur, 11th June 1878. Government of India letter above.

NOTE.—The latest information received at this Office, in a telegram from the Viceroy of India of the 3rd August 1878, mentions that General Abramof, Governor of Samarkand, had actually reached Cabul with a large Russian escort on or about the 22nd July 1878. He delivered to the Ameer in Durbar, on the 26th idem, letters from the Emperor and from General Kauffman, to which the Ameer sent replies by special messenger to Tashkend, after a grand review of the Afghan troops on the 2nd of August 1878.

finite reply. In short, he is trying all he can to gain time."

Captain Cavagnari adds—

"In order to settle what reply shall be given to the Russian proposals, great efforts are being made by the Cabul durbar to collect an assembly of all the Chiefs, Khans, and chosen men of the kingdom and its neighbourhood, which will probably take place next month. (The Mohammedan month Rajab will commence on the 28th June.) The Amir desires that Afghanistan may remain independent, and that there should be no Envoys of a different religion to Mohammedanism in his kingdom. The Amir, in alluding on one occasion to the proposals of the Russians, stated that these proposals were adverse to the interests of the British Government, and that it remains to be seen how the British authorities, when they heard of them, would act in their own interests with regard to the Indian Empire. That he adhered to his original determination, and did not want to make enemies of either of the great powers; but that, if any one tried to injure him, he would do what he could to withstand them, and that "elevation or destruction is in the hands of the Almighty."

* Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury,
3rd July 1878.

In the meantime, Lord Augustus Loftus reports that on inquiring,* on the 2nd July, of M. de Giers whether any Russian representative had been instructed by the Imperial Government at St. Petersburg or by the Governor General of Turkistan to proceed to Cabul, he replied that no such mission had been, or was intended to be, sent to Cabul either by the Imperial Government or by General Kauffmann. Lord A. Loftus's letter is so important at the present moment that it is herewith given *in extenso*. He writes:—

"At an interview I had yesterday with M. de Giers, I inquired of His Excellency whether any Russian representative was instructed, either by the Imperial Government at St. Petersburg or by the Governor General of Turkistan, to proceed to Cabul.

"M. de Giers replied that no such mission had been or was intended to be sent to Cabul, either by the Imperial Government or by General Kauffmann. I observed to His Excellency that for some time past a Russian agent had resided at Cabul, and that intrigues had been apparently carrying on with a view to create dissention between the Ameer of Afghanistan and the Indian Government. I stated that this course was not in conformity with the arrangements entered into between the Governments of England and Russia, and that if it continued it must inevitably produce results prejudicial to the good relations between the two Governments.

"M. de Giers replied that there had been a moment when war appeared to be almost imminent, and that under those circumstances no doubt the

military commanders conceived it to be their duty to take such measures as might be necessary and serviceable to their country. He denied, however, as far as he was aware, that there had been any intrigues with the Ameer of Cabul of the nature to which I had alluded.

"I inquired from M. de Giers whether any expedition was intended or was now being undertaken by General Lomakin against the Turkomans. His Excellency professed ignorance as to any such intention, observing that it was frequently necessary to repel the attacks of those tribes, or to punish them for raids committed on Russian commerce. I finally observed to His Excellency that, at a moment when Europe was sitting in Congress for the purpose of maintaining peace, it was advisable to avoid anything which could disturb the harmony and good understanding between England and Russia (the two Asiatic powers) in other regions, where their mutual good fellowship and co-operation could render such valuable service to the cause of humanity and civilization."

In the meantime corroborative reports were received, through the medium of the English press, of the activity of the Russians in Turkistan. The "Times" of the 17th July, for instance, published the following telegraphic letter* from Paris :—

* Dated 16th July 1878.

"General Kauffmann's plan of campaign in Central Asia, drawn up last April, will be carried out, the "Temps" believes, as Russia's reply to the Cyprus Treaty. The main body concentrated at Samarcand was to march on Djam, a Russian fortified post on the frontier of Bokhara, and thence advance according to further instructions. The left wing, starting from Marghilan, in the recently annexed district of Ferghana, was to cross the Alai Dag chain, traverse the Krasnovodsk valley to the Amu-Daria basin, and follow that stream. The right wing, starting from Petro Alexandrovsk, was to ascend the river to Charjui, whence a direct road leads to Bokhara. These three movements were evidently aimed at the capital of Bokhara, and such an expedition was practicable with limited forces, the main body being only 12 battalions strong, supported by Cossacks and artillery, and the wings much smaller. General Stolito's order of the day was dated the 26th of May, and afterwards inserted in the Turkistan official paper. On the 3rd of June the Tashkend municipality voted money for hiring baggage waggons. Later orders of the day organized the Intendance Corps, laid down sanitary prescriptions, and granted supplementary rations, tea being increased and spirits prohibited. On the 11th of June, after a review of the troops, the artillery and engineers left Tashkend; the infantry and cavalry began to march two days later, and on the 28th the head-quarters set out. Here the latest tidings end; but the 'Temps,' judging from the tone of the Russian press, thinks there is every reason to believe that the Russians are now on the march, not, as originally intended, to invade

India, but to occupy a region which will bring them near to it, viz., Bokhara and the upper basin of the Amu-Daria to the foot of the passes leading through the Hindoo Koosh chain to Afghanistan."

The "Morning Post" of the 30th July 1878 reported:—

"The Moscow correspondent of the 'Cologne Gazette' states that it may be regarded as certain that the Russian Government will before long claim the surrender of Kizil Arvat, a strong position in Central Asia, most advantageously situated, and which was occupied for some time by General Lomakin during his expedition against the Tekke Turkomans. General Lomakin was compelled, by reverses with which his forces met on advancing as far as Boormah, in the direction of Abiverd, to abandon the place and to retire to Krasnovodsk. But it is understood that a Russian force will return to take the place, if necessary, by force. Kizil Arvat is a point of supreme importance to Russia, for its possession secures a new communication with Chikislar and threatens Herat. It is also thought that the Russians will occupy Sarans, which commands a passage across the Kuren Dagh mountains practicable for artillery."

The "Globe" of the 6th of August 1878 also wrote:—

"A naval correspondent of the Russian journal 'Yacht,' writing from Kazalinsk under date of June 31st, throws further light upon the mysterious movements of General Kauffmann in Central Asia, and displays the part that the Aral flotilla was assigned to take in the proposed march upon the river Oxus:—'The feverish activity which for a time has characterized our flotilla will not come to a head until the arrival at Kazalinsk of the military stores from Russia. These latter will arrive about the middle of July. The steamer "Syr-Daria," with the commandant of the Aral flotilla on board, has gone up the river Syr-Daria to Fort Perovsky, with the intention of proceeding higher. The steamer "Perovsky," despatched up the river at the opening of the navigation, is at present at Chinaz, where, it is stated, it will be engaged during the present week in transporting troops across the Syr-Daria.' Chinaz, the place mentioned in this letter, is a town about 800 miles higher up the river than Fort Perovsky, and more than a thousand from the Aral. It is the ferry on the Syr-Daria lying between Tashkend and Samarcand, and is sixty miles from the capital of Central Asia. To traverse this distance would occupy a week, so that the intelligence transmitted from Tashkend to the 'Moscow Gazette,' that the troops would begin their march from that town on June 12th, and the intelligence despatched to the 'Yacht' from Kazalinsk, that the 'Perovsky' would help transport the troops across the Syr-Daria during the week ending June 31st, would thus confirm each other. The 'Yacht' goes on to

say :—“The steamer “Aral” has also been sent to assist the “Perovsky” at Chinaz. As regards the steamer “Samarcand,” this vessel, together with barges No. 1 and No. 9, is lying at present at Kazalinsk, thoroughly equipped for a voyage, with extra stores, provisions for six months, and a full complement of artillery. These three vessels and the “Perovsky,” as soon as that steamer returns from Chinaz, or even before, will be despatched on service to the river Amu-Daria. The troops from Tashkend will march in three columns, and the vessels I have mentioned will in all likelihood assist in transporting them across the Oxus.” In connection with these last remarks it should be stated that last summer Colonel Ivanoff solved the disputed question of the navigability of the Oxus by proceeding in a steamer from Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk (Khiva) to Charjui, and that it is to this particular ferry, lying on the route between Bokhara and Merv, that General Kauffmann has ordered one of his columns to march. It would thus appear that the vessels of the Aral flotilla probably assisted General Kauffmann’s forces to cross the Jaxartes or Syr-Daria during the latter end of June, and that, having fulfilled this task, they have steamed down that river, across the Aral, and up the Oxus or Amu-Daria to Charjui, at which place it is possible they are just arrived at the present moment, in time to meet the troops marching through Bokhara.”

The Russian press were also still very frank in their expositions on the current events of the day in Turkistan. The “Golos,” of 28th June 1878, wrote :—

“England is alone vulnerable for us in India, and therefore it is on the Indian frontiers that the whole of our defensive measures must be henceforth concentrated against the ally of Turkey. We can, and we must, convert our Central Asian possessions into a formidable base of operations for ever possible and ever probable military operations against England.”

And the “Moscow Gazette,” of 7th (19th) July 1871, wrote :—

“The time has come for establishing Russian influence among all the populations of Central Asia, and this is all the more facile seeing that the ruler of Afghanistan is not on good terms with the English, our opponents in Central Asia. The strengthening of our influence on the borders of the dominions of the Empress of India was the natural answer to the English seizure of Cyprus and of all Asia Minor. This may be the most modest, nay, even the peaceful object of those military expeditions which are now afoot in Turkistan. As our Berlin correspondent has expressed himself, two political powers are now opposed to each other in Asia, which must eventually come into collision. England desires to be the more immediate neighbour of Russia in Asia Minor; and

it is, therefore, natural that Russia should wish to approach a little nearer to the English frontiers of India.

“From the general order issued in May last it was only to be gathered that our troops were to march into the territories of Bokhara, on one side to Charjui and Djam, and on the other, towards the south from Marghilan, beyond the borders of the Ferghana region. It was also stated that each column should ‘proceed further according to given orders.’ We know now the further progress of the columns to the head waters of the Oxus. In May last the Ameer of Bokhara was invited to co-operate in this advance, and ‘to facilitate the provisioning of our columns by means of voluntary sales of bread, flour, and other necessaries by the inhabitants of the Khanat.’ The Ameer Said Muzafer replied to the officer sent to him by the Governor General that he ‘was most willing to fulfil the desires of the Governor General, and that he would endeavour to prove useful according to the measure of his capabilities, hoping thereby to strengthen the amicable relations between Bokhara and Russia.’ At the same time, according to the ‘Turkistan Gazette’ of the 13th (25th) June, referring to the letters addressed to him by our agent, Mr. Weinberg, the Ameer desired to know ‘how we contemplated coming to arrangements with Cabul.’ Mr. Weinberg replied that a special embassy should determine our relations in either one or the other way, *i.e.*, in a friendly or in a hostile sense, and that all would ‘depend on the straightforwardness and judiciousness of the Ameer of Cabul;’ but that we entertained no spirit or intentions in respect to him.

“The concentration of our forces at the head waters of the Oxus, and the necessity of determining our relations with Cabul for the achievement of the object imposed upon our forces, give indication of an expedition with a purpose more serious than the curbing of Turkomans and an advance on Merv, the centre of their resistance.”

The “Gazette de St. Petersburg,” of the 17th July 1878, also wrote:—

“Instead of Turkey we have now on our Asian frontier another enemy equally deadly to deal with, namely, England. That which every one has for a long time suspected has now become confirmed by England’s policy of extortion; she is no longer an European Power, but a State thoroughly and essentially Asiatic. Henceforward she will occupy herself exclusively with her interests in Asia, a fact which makes it the duty of Russia to abandon her former policy—a policy, be it said in parenthesis, wanting in precision. She must remember that England makes her conquests without having to fire a shot, without spending over much money. The example is a good one, and to be followed when opportunity offers. In Asia we are hampered by no tradition; now is the time, then, to set on foot the policy of Russian interests, and to ensure the

success of that policy. In the first instance, the immediate necessity presents itself of preserving to our commerce and our industries in Asia that security which is indispensable to their wellbeing. Above all, this fact should be borne in mind, that the English nation has taken up the position of head of the Mussulman world. The Mahomedan peoples of Asia Minor, recognizing in the influence which has been exercised by Russia only a source of congratulation, nourish towards her feelings of profound gratitude and real attachment; but we should by no means allow this to deaden our vigilance, especially as we have to do with tribes ever ready to yield to the agitations of fanaticism, religious and political. Consequently it is of the highest importance for us to concentrate anew our efforts in Asia, and to watch over our south-eastern frontiers; and the enrolment of the three new detachments annexed to our army in Turkistan will, above all measures, materially conduce towards the attainment of that object. Certain of our comrades have seized on this opportunity for preaching a crusade against India. Our soldiers, however, will have another mission to fulfil, namely, that of protecting our industrial and commercial interests in Asia, which, unless we take care, may be one of these days a subject for English menace."

Many more opinions of a similar character could be quoted from the columns of the Russian press, but it hardly requires more than what has already been recorded in this Note to show the meaning of the Oxus demonstration from a *Russian* point of view.

Meanwhile, the Viceroy of India, having received information of the arrival of General Abramof at Cabul, as indicated in the Note at page 42,* telegraphed that, if this important question were left to be dealt with as between the Government of India and the Ameer, he proposed to insist on an immediate suitable reception at Cabul of a European British Mission, to which reception he did not anticipate serious obstacles.

The Secretary of State for India approved this step,† desiring Lord Lytton, in case of any refusal on the Ameer's part to receive the Mission, to telegraph further as to the steps he would then desire to take to enforce compliance with its reception. Viscount Cranbrook at the same time addressed representations to the Foreign Office, not only on the subject of the Russian Mission to Cabul, but in regard to the simultaneous forward movement of Russian troops towards the Oxus and into the Akhal country.

In regard to the first subject, His Lordship, after recapitulating‡ the serious breach of engagement on the part of the Russian Government which the Mission to Cabul involved, said :—

"The Russian Government has, during the last ten years, stood pledged to an attitude of absolute non-intervention in the affairs of Afghanistan. On the other hand the policy of the British Government

* Viceroy to Viscount Cranbrook, 2nd August 1878.

† Viscount Cranbrook to Viceroy, 3rd August 1878.

‡ Sir Louis Mallet to Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 8th August 1878.

towards that State during the same period has been shaped in an entirely opposite sense ; it has been, in fact, to exercise a proper and legitimate influence at Cabul ; to encourage Shere Ali in a peaceful policy towards his neighbours ; to respect his independence ; and, whilst accepting no further responsibility in regard to his action than to press on him when needful our friendly advice, to protect him from foreign interference and aggression. In other words, whilst Russia has bound herself to abstain from exercising influence of any kind in Afghanistan, the policy of Her Majesty's Government has been, in the interests of peace, to exercise an influence which should be unchallenged and paramount. It is true," added Lord Cranbrook, "that the Russian Government has denied the existence of the reality of any such step on its part as that now reported. M. de Giers has formally stated, in fact, to Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg that no such Mission as that referred to by Lord Lytton has been, or was intended to be, sent to Cabul by the Imperial Government or by General Kauffman ; he has, with equal emphasis, denied the existence of intrigues between General Kauffman and Shere Ali. But in the face of the the particulars now received from India, corroborated as they are from other sources, Viscount Cranbrook cannot pretend to accept as satisfactory these denials." In short, Lord Cranbrook was "strongly of opinion that Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg should be at once instructed to address the Russian Cabinet upon the proceedings of the Russian authorities at St. Petersburg. It is the Russian Cabinet alone," he said, "which is responsible for the acts of its agents, and it is the Russian Governor General of Turkistan, rather than the Ameer Shere Ali, who, with or without authority, is at this moment pursuing a policy of which the effect must be to seriously agitate the minds of Her Majesty's subjects throughout India. In view of the gravity of the situation, the Secretary of State for India may safely leave to Lord Salisbury, who has a full knowledge of the question, the adoption of such language at St. Petersburg as he may think best calculated to bring about a result such as the engagements of Russia entitle us to expect."

* Hon. E. Stanhope to Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 13th August 1878.

In regard to the reported movements of Russian columns in Turkistan, Lord Cranbrook,* after alluding in detail to those movements, and reminding the Foreign Office of the promises of non-extension of territory made in 1875 by the Russian Government, requested Lord Salisbury to keep him informed of any measure he might adopt to obtain explanations from the Russian Government in regard to them, and the result.

† Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to India Office, 12th August 1878, and reply, 13th August 1878.

Following these representations, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs† addressed to Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at St. Petersburg a Despatch, dated 14th August 1878 (the terms of which were concurred in by the Secretary of State

for India) embodying the facts narrated in the India Office letter, and adding,—

“I must, therefore, request you to mention these reports to Prince Gortschakof, and to inquire whether there is any foundation for them. You will not conceal from His Highness that proceedings of the kind referred to would cause uneasiness in India and dissatisfaction in this country, and should it prove that there is any truth in the statement that a Russian Mission has proceeded to Cabul, you will express the hope of Her Majesty’s Government that it may be at once withdrawn, as being inconsistent with the assurances so frequently received from His Highness.”

No further information has been received up to the date of this Note on this new and important phase of the Central Asian question, except an assurance* from M. de Giers that all Russian military preparations in Central Asia have been suspended; and “that no measures, either military or political,” are being at present taken against England; a telegram also has arrived from the Viceroy, to the effect that Sir Neville Chamberlain had accepted charge of the British Mission to Cabul, which might be expected to leave Peshawur about the 8th of September 1878.

† RUSSIAN MILITARY FORCE IN TURKISTAN; AND COMPARATIVE NUMBERS AND QUALITY OF RUSSIAN AND BRITISH FORCES THAT COULD, IN CASE OF NEED, BE CONCENTRATED ON A GIVEN POINT, SAY CABUL.—The troops belonging to the military district of Turkistan consist of one brigade of rifles, seventeen battalions of frontier infantry, two brigades of field artillery, one company of sappers, some local and fortress troops, and detachments of Cossacks. There is no regular cavalry in Turkistan.

The rifle brigade consists of four battalions. Each battalion, in time of peace, consists of 22 officers, 477 non-commissioned officers and men, and 78 non-combatants. In time of war it comprises 26 officers, 829 non-commissioned officers and men, 96 non-combatants, 69 camels. Each battalion consists of four companies.

The frontier battalions, of which there are seventeen, are intended for field or for local duties as required. In peace a frontier battalion consists of 21 officers, 582 non-commissioned officers and men, 72 non-combatants, and 15 horses; in war, of 26 officers, 1,022 non-commissioned officers and men, 92 non-combatants, and 68 horses. Each battalion consists of five companies—four line and one rifle companies.

There are two brigades of field artillery. The first artillery brigade consists of five batteries,—one

NOTE.—Since this was written, information has been received from India of the death of Abdullah Jan, the favourite son of Shere Ali and heir apparent to the throne. It is believed that this event may delay the setting out of the British Mission. Shere Ali will now have to select another heir apparent, of whom the choice appears to lie between Yakub Khan, his second son, aged about 30, and now in close imprisonment, and Ahmed Ali Khan, his grandson, an intelligent boy of about 15 years of age, son of the former heir apparent Sirdar Mahomed Ali Khan, who, to his father’s intense grief, was killed in action during the civil war of 1866.

Regarding the young Ahmed Ali Khan, a good authority (Ghulam Ahmad) writes:—

“His manners are likely to make him popular. He considers himself as a claimant for the heir-apparentship of the Amir, as his father was His Highness’s eldest son, and was appointed by him his heir apparent. Should eventually the reins of the Government of Afghanistan be assumed by Sardar Abdulla Khan, or should they fall to Sardar Mahomed Yakub Khan, he will bear a grudge to them, though, as appears from the present state of affairs, he will not be able to cause any injury to them. The Amir is very favourably disposed to him, and he occasionally waits on His Highness to pay compliments. He is under the guardianship of his uncle, Sardar Mahomed Ibrahim Khan, Governor of Cabul.”

Sir R. Pollock calls him Ahmad Mir Khan, and in 1873 wrote regarding him:—“His mother is a Ghilzai; age 10 years. On his father’s death (in the battle of Kajbaz) the Amir treated this grandson with special favour, and at that time considered him entitled to the Wali Ahadship in room of his father; but in 1869 Abdulla Jan’s name was mentioned by the Amir as Wali Ahad, owing to his mother’s influence; but for her interference Ahmad Mir Khan would have succeeded.”

Rifle Brigade.

Frontier Battalions.

Field Artillery.

† This information has been courteously given to me by Captain Clarke, of the Intelligence Department.

9-pounder, two 4-pounders, and two mountain (3-pounder) batteries; the second artillery brigade consists of two 4-pounder and one mountain battery; in all 8 batteries. Each battery consists of four guns in peace, eight in war. The establishment of a 9-pounder battery in time of peace is 6 officers, 189 non-commissioned officers and men, and 29 non-combatants; in war, 6 officers, 281 non-commissioned officers and men, and 38 non-combatants. A 4-pounder battery in peace consists of 6 officers, 149 non-commissioned officers and men, and 29 non-combatants; in war of 6 officers, 219 non-commissioned officers and men, and 37 non-combatants. A mountain battery consists in peace of 6 officers, 131 non-commissioned officers and men, and 36 non-combatants; in war of 6 officers, 254 non-commissioned officers and men, and 115 non-combatants.

Sappers.

There is one company of sappers, having the same establishment in peace as in war.

Local Troops.

By an order of the 1st April 1876, the local troops stationed in the Turkistan district were to be formed into three battalions of 1,200 men each, stationed respectively at Samarcand, Tashkent, and Verny, and 14 local detachments of 139, 250, 300, or 400 men.

Cossacks.

In addition to the foregoing regular troops, there are numerous Cossacks. At the present time there would appear to be about 10 regiments (each of six sotnias) of Cossacks, and three batteries of Cossack horse artillery; but a larger force could be brought into the district if necessary.

The Cossacks available for service in Turkistan are the Orenburg, Ural, Siberian, and Semirechia. Of these, according to the new Cossack regulations, the Orenburg Cossacks maintain five regiments and four batteries in peace, 17 regiments and eight batteries in war; the Ural Cossacks, three regiments in peace, nine in war; the Siberian, three in peace, and nine in war; and the Semirechia, two regiments. In all, 13 regiments and four batteries in peace, 37 regiments and eight batteries in war.

The batteries of Cossack artillery have six guns in peace and war.

The following was the distribution of the troops on the 13th February 1877 :—

1st Artillery Brigade	-	Tashkent.
2nd " "	-	Verny.
Hoosed Mountain Battery	-	Tashkent.
Turkestan Rifle Brigade		
(four battalions)	-	Tashkent.
1st Frontier Battalion	-	Karakol.
2nd " "	-	Kokand.
3rd " "	-	Samarcand.
4th " "	-	Osh.
5th " "	-	Katty-Kurgan.
6th " "	-	Samarcand.
7th " "	-	Hodjent.
8th " "	-	Petro-Alexandrovsk.
9th " "	-	Samarcand.
10th " "	-	Kuldja.

11th Frontier Battalion	- Verny.
12th " "	- "
13th " "	- Petro-Alexandrovsk.
14th " "	- Marghilan.
15th " "	- Kuldja.
16th " "	- Andijan.
17th " "	- Tashkent.
1st Local Battalion	- "
2nd " "	- Samarcand.
3rd " "	- Verny.

Local detachments at Kazala, Perovsk, Chimkent, Aulie-Ata, Hodjent, Chinaz, Turkistan, Sergiopal, Kapal, and Tokmak.

Sapper Company - - Tashkent.

Troops not belonging to Turkistan military district:—

3rd Western Siberian Frontier Battalion	- - Tashkent.
1st Regiment Orenburg Cossacks	- - Petro-Alexandrovsk.
2nd ditto, ditto	- - Fort No. 1.
3rd ditto, ditto	- - Andijan.
4th ditto, ditto	- - Samarcand.
5th ditto, ditto	- - Kokand.
Semirechia Cossacks	- Almatin and Kopal.

The strength of this force (exclusive of Cossacks) is given as follows in tables compiled in Russia, but there is every reason to believe that their numbers are exaggerated:—

	Officers.	Non-Commissioned Officers and Men (Combatants).	Musicians.	Officials.	Non-combatants.	Horses.
17 Frontier Battalions - -	533	18,300	249	60	1,434	616
Frontier Rifle Brigade - -	122	3,536	85	14	350	165
1st Foot Artillery Brigade - -	40	958	15	1	149	359
2nd " " " " - -	34	610	13	3	142	295
Horse Artillery Battery - -	7	266	3	—	31	242
Sapper Company - -	7	304	3	—	15	6
5th Siberian Frontier Battalions - -	31	1,064	14	4	92	36
Field Troops - -	774	25,088	382	82	2,223	1,719
<i>Local Troops.</i>						
Local Battalions - -	60	3,140	81	3	115	8
Local Detachments - -	54	4,680	41	—	164	—
Fortress Artillery - -	30	910	3	11	98	—
Local Troops - -	144	8,730	75	14	377	8
<i>Administrative Services.</i>						
Staff, Topographical Department, Intendance, Hospitals, Clothing, Stores, Arsenal, Laboratory, &c. &c. - -	123	147	49	219	1,756	16
Grand total - -	1,041	33,965	506	315	4,356	1,743

Such being the numerical Russian force in Turkistan, irrespective, it is presumed, of the additions made to it during the last few months to make up the strength of the columns at present in movement, it only remains to add that the Orenburg army numbers about 7,000 regular and 13,000 irregular troops, of whom about 4,000 are included in the Turkistan army. This army is mostly broken up in small garrisons over a large area. Their nearest ports are three months' march from the Afghan frontier.

The army of the Caucasus numbers about 90,000 men, which in war time can be raised to about 120,000. At present, however, until proper lines of communication are erected by the occupation of the Akhal country, this army is practically isolated from the Central Asian forces.

The British army in India, on the other hand, consists of 66,000 British and 123,000 Native troops, besides 409 guns. About two eighths of this force are stationed on, or close to, railways; and can, therefore, be concentrated at given points in a few days, provided the locality from which they are taken be sufficiently tranquil to justify a sudden withdrawal of troops. This total is, of course, exclusive of the Hyderabad contingent and other subsidiary forces, amounting in the aggregate to about 20,000 men, all, more or less, under British officers and British control. It is also exclusive of the purely Native forces of Native States, which may be roughly estimated at 350,000 (besides many guns), of no military value in their present condition.

Taking Cabul as a measuring point, the British Government has 25,000 men within 30 days' march of that place, and 120,000 men within 60 days' march of it. And when the railway to Peshawur is completed there will be 100,000 men within 30 days' march of Cabul, provided they can be, as said before, spared from India. On the other hand, the Russians have no appreciable force (or at any rate had none till the present movements commenced) nearer than 60 days', and only 25,000 men within 90 days' march, of Cabul. As regards the quality of the troops, man to man, the character of the Turkistan troops is probably above that of our own Native troops. The Cossacks are inferior to our own irregular cavalry.

To enter into any detailed considerations as to the cost and extent of probable military operations involved by the extension of Russian influence to Cabul, and any consequent defection of the Amœr from the British alliance, would be beyond the scope of this Note. These considerations have formed the subject of much thought in India. The British Government could no doubt move 30,000 men across its borders in case of absolute necessity, operating on Cabul or Herat from Peshawur, the Koorum valley, Dera Ismail Khan, and Jacobabad. The cost of putting such a force in movement has been calculated at about 250,000*l.*, as a first charge, for operations extending over four months.

But there does not appear to be any immediate necessity for operations of this extended nature beyond the frontier. And indeed, if it be at any future time necessary to bring Shere Ali to reason by a practical demonstration of power, or to hold our position in Afghanistan by force of arms, it can, perhaps, best be done by an advance from Quetta or Candahar on the one side, and the occupation of the Koorum valley on the other. It is satisfactory to learn at any rate from very reliable sources of information, that if ever matters assume so serious an aspect as to call for this forward movement, the populations of Western Afghanistan are ready to welcome British intervention with open arms. This view is confirmed by an independent authority of some weight. M. Vambery, who in a recent letter to a London newspaper,* says, "I do not deny that Shir Ali Khan and a few sirdars whose unbounded thirst for gold is not fully satiated by English subsidies, and who, without the slightest notion of honour, might be easily bought by a heavy rain of Russian roubles. I am fully aware of the intimacy existing between Bala-Hissar, in Kabul, and the Governor-General's palace, in Tashkend. A Turkish friend of mine, who was recently in Afghanistan, has furnished me with evident proofs of that, but I beg leave to distinguish between the Afghan people and their Prince. As far as my personal experiences go, I can never entertain the possibility of an honest alliance between the bulk of the Afghan nation and Russia. Lord Lawrence, the late Governor General of India, from a letter I have seen of his, is not inclined to believe fully my statements regarding the feeling of gratitude the people of Western Afghanistan cherish even to this day towards the English, under whose rule they first learned the lesson of orderly Government and security; but I can assure his Lordship that such is really the case. The English occupation of West Afghanistan lives in the memories of the trading and agricultural classes, and this has essentially augmented during the last decade, when Afghan business people had the opportunity of seeing in Russian Turkestan what Muscovite administration was like. As I hear from my friends in Central Asia, not half the number of the former Afghan traders in the bazaars of the towns are to be met with to-day. Russian prohibitive duties, the vexation of natchalnik's, and many other disagreeable innovations, have embittered their feelings against Russian civilization, and they prefer to renounce all gains than to come into contact with the abhorred Muscovite. If we compare, therefore, this well-grounded and outspoken horror for Russian rule with the benignant impression left by the English 30 years ago in Kandahar and Herat, we must not be surprised by the conclusion that the re-appearance of English soldiers in Western Afghanistan would be hailed with joy."

As to the feeling at Herat in regard to the Russians

NOTE.—Operations beyond the frontier are entirely a matter of preparation and distance, to which the Government of India are fully alive. Some of the distances are as follows :—

	Miles.
Peshawur to Cabul	- 191
Jacobabad to Candahar	- 343
Quetta to Candahar	- 233
Candahar to Cabul	- 318
Cabul to Balkh	- 357
„ to Oxus	- 424
Herat to Balkh	- 370
„ to Merv	- 265
„ to Cabul	- 200

The road from Merv to Herat is a plain, with the exception of one pass across low hills between Khush and Kara Tuppa. (Napier, 1874.)

* "Daily Telegraph," 24th August 1878.

* Captain Napier's Report, 2nd April 1875.

Influence of European powers.

and the English respectively, it is interesting to read what Captain Napier* writes in 1875. He says :—

“Of the influence of the only two European Powers of which the Heratees know anything I was able to gain some general ideas.

“The political agitation consequent on the recent movements of Russia and England of course spreads thither, and Herat is regarded as an objective point of all attempts at extension of influence by moral or physical forces, secondary only to Merv.

“The people and Chiefs have had direct contact with both England and Russia through the Herat Mission of 1837–38 and through Khanikoff's Mission in 1858. The Russian party wintered at Herat, travelling further under Persian auspices. Its chief, M. Khanikoff, cannot have failed to add to the vivid impressions of Russian power that prevail in Khorassan and Herat, and his presence was at least a proof to the people of the extensive influence and wide scope of the designs of the Russian Government.

“Regarding the political effects of the residence of the English Mission in Herat, judging from what I have observed and heard, it is, I think, scarcely too much to say that it has left the country fairly open to any efforts that it may be desirable to make towards a fresh extension of influence or to actual occupation,—and this in spite of subsequent events. The triumph of Yar Mahomed Khan, the retirement of the Mission, and consequent injury to those who had shown themselves in any way friendly to British interests, has of course left a perceptible and indelible impression, the adverse force of which has been much increased by subsequent events in Afghanistan, and by a long period of unaccountable (to Orientals) inaction, during which our prestige diminished and the power of Russia became a tangible fact to the people. But our influence is a reality, and we should, I believe, find the people and their Chiefs in the main ready to receive us on the faith of past good will and of benefits conferred.

“The Russians do not appear to have now any basis of influence or or any connections beyond what has already been noted in reference to Yakoob Khan; but if they should occupy Mashad as a ‘commercial’ centre, they will no doubt find means of communicating direct with Herat.

“The Turkomans form now to the north and north-east a complete barrier to any advance of influence in that direction, but only by their adverse occupation of Merv, by which they maintain the desert as a barrier between Russian and English influence. So long as that barrier is maintained, it appeared to me that the Heratees of all classes would be open solely to British influences. When once it is passed, Russia comes in on equal terms as regards physical difficulties of communication, if not at an advantage, and with the additional prestige of unchecked advance.

“The disadvantage in the event of war of the presence of Russia so near Herat is so obvious, that the subject must have already claimed much attention, and is moreover beyond the scope of my instructions. But having had the advantage of a near view of the position, and of many local lights, I may be permitted to state my opinion, that, assuming Russia’s object to go no further than the creation of embarrassments in Afghanistan and India when need arises, it is of vital importance to the successful pursuance of the present policy of maintaining a free, independent, and friendly State in Afghanistan that there should be no point of contact in such close proximity of Herat. With the desert between Russian influence and Afghanistan at all points, the Afghans may be left to follow out their own destiny, and to lay themselves open, it may be hoped, gradually to the influences of civilization; for, apart from other advantages, mere difficulties of communication will then have reduced to a minimum the power to give the material assistance that must be the basis of the moral influence necessary to the success of such intrigues.”

THE AFGHAN ARMY AND FINANCES.—The following is said to be the state of the Amir’s exchequer.* The annual revenue of the whole country is two crores of rupees (*i.e.* about 2,000,000*l.* sterling). There is an annual saving of eight lacs (*i.e.* 80,000*l.*); three lacs are spent in charity to mullahs and mendicants, one lac on khillats, and eleven lacs on the harems of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan’s sons. The balance is expended for military purposes.

In the treasury there are fifty lacs rupees of jewels, one lac gold mohurs, and two crores rupees.

The Amir has 50,000 muskets, 5,000 bayonets, 2,000 swords and scimitars, a quantity of iron for cannon and shot, 500,000 cannon shot, 208 kharwars of gunpowder, 90 elephants, 800 she-elephants, 3,000 horses, 6,000 camels, 20,000 ponies, and 400 cannons.

There are altogether six factories for turning out ammunition:—

- | | | | | |
|--------|-----------------|-----------|--------------------|-------------------|
| No. 1. | For cannon, | turns out | 2 cannons | per month. |
| „ 2. | „ muskets | „ | 200 muskets | „ |
| „ 3. | „ bayonets | „ | 200 bayonets | „ |
| „ 4. | „ cannon shot | „ | 2,000 cannon shots | per month. |
| „ 5. | „ gunpowder | „ | 2 kharwars of gun- | powder per month. |
| „ 6. | Name not given. | | | |

The strength of the regular army is said to be about 80,000 men, composed as follows:—

- 65 battalions of infantry.
- 21 regiments of cavalry.
- 6,000 men employed in the artillery.
- 90 cannons (the remaining artillery are without soldiers).

* Government of India Letter No. 31, Secret, 9th May 1878. Notes of a Sayad of Khanegorum, after visit to Cabul, dated 10th March 1878.

The troops were distributed as follows :—

	Battalions of Infantry.	Regiments of Cavalry.	Troops of Artillery.
Hirat - - - -	22	2	1
Kandhar - - - -	4	2	4
Turkistan - - - -	13	6	13
Jalalabad - - - -	9	1	9
Kurrum - - - -	3	1	3
Have gone to Taruk (? Tur- kistan) - - - -	6	2	6
Kabul - - - -	7	4	{ Remaining Artillerymen

Six battalions of infantry, three troops of artillery, and two regiments of cavalry have gone from Kabul to Kandhar; six battalions have been sent to Turkistan, and 11 battalions have been ordered from Hirat to Kandhar. There were before this four battalions at Kandhar.

Forty more battalions are being raised, of these 10 battalions have already been raised.

Since 1869 the British Government has given Shere Ali many substantial favours, consisting of—

12 guns (a light field and a mountain battery fully equipped).

21,400 rifles, including 5,000 Snider rifles given by Lord Northbrook in 1873.

11,000 muskets.

1,200 carbines.

1,000 pistols.

250,000*l.* sterling.

All without any substantial return or concession, even so far as admission of British travellers or agents into Afghanistan.

RUSSIAN TRADE IN CENTRAL ASIA AND PERSIA.

—To embark upon a discussion of the whole subject of Russian trade in Central Asia in all its ramifications would be to enter upon a very wide field, and would involve the consultation of numerous authorities. Of the more valuable works on the question may be mentioned; Mr. Michell's pamphlet on *Overland Trade between Russia and China*, dated May 1871, Mr. Schuyler's work on *Turkistan*, and a paper read by Sir D. Forsyth to the Society of Arts, and published in the *Journal* of 9th March 1877. It seems only necessary at present, however, to consider very briefly the effect of the protective policy of Russia on British Indian commercial interests.

On her European frontier, Russia, in spite of a prohibitive tariff, has found it impossible to exclude foreign goods, but over her Asiatic boundary the import of English wares, with the exception of indigo, is totally prohibited, and it may be assumed that wherever that boundary may be fixed the same policy will be pursued. Her proceedings in Turkistan since the year 1868 leave little room for doubt on this point. At the close of that year

regulations were issued in regard to the duties on tea imported into Turkistan, which had for an evident object the securing of a monopoly to the Kiachta route from China through Russian territory. Inquiries were consequently set on foot by the Government of India, which satisfied them that Russian influence had been brought to bear in various ways in order to obstruct trade from Hindostan to the Central Asian Khanates. Faiz Buksh, writing from Samarcand in October 1869, gave an account of the state of trade at that place, and reported that a strict prohibition had been imposed by the Russian authorities on the import of British Indian merchandise into the districts beyond the Syr-Daria. As the Russian frontiers have been extended since that date, so, *pari passu*, has her customs line been advanced.

Mr. Schuyler in his work on Turkistan estimated the value of Russian trade with the Khanates in 1872 at 2,000,000*l.*, and regarded it as falling off rather than increasing. On the other hand, Sir D. Forsyth in his pamphlet makes out that, in spite of all obstacles, the trade between Central Asia and British India reaches the yearly value of five and a half millions, of which exports from India may be put at three millions.

It may be remarked that the Russians have been by no means lax in their endeavours to improve trade communications both by way of the rivers Jaxartes and Oxus, as well as by land.

With regard to the trade from the Mediterranean to Persia and Central Asia, it must be remembered that the Turks have allowed the trade from the Black Sea eastwards to fall into Russian hands, and that English commerce, instead of passing through Trebizond and Erzeroum has, until recently, taken the Tiflis route. Up to the present, Russia has not levied transit duty on European goods passing through Trans-Caucasia to Persia; one reason for this departure from her usual policy was probably the fear of an alternative route being established through Turkish territory; another, perhaps, the advantages derived from the carrying trade enjoyed by the Poti-Tiflis Railway. According to a recent communication (dated 1st June 1878) from Major Smith of the Telegraph Department in Persia, a change of policy has now taken place; owing to ravages caused by the war, the Erzeroum road, as a trade route, has practically ceased to exist, and the Russian Government, thinking that the Caucasus would have a monopoly of the transit, have extended their general system to that province, with the object of shutting all but Russian merchandise out of Northern and Central Persia. Major Smith, judging by the greatly increased commercial activity prevailing at Bagdad Bussorah and Kermanshab, which he attributes both to the war and to the Russian transit regulations, thinks that in this matter the Czar's Government have somewhat overreached themselves by overlooking the facilities offered for European

commerce by the Bagdad route. He goes on to urge that the present juncture seems an opportune one for the adoption of measures calculated to fix the southern as the main artery of the external commerce of Persia, and by its means to secure for England and India the bulk of the trade of the country. He specially urges the advantages offered by an opening up of the Karun river to steam navigation, a measure which has already been advocated with the Persian Government, but which, owing it is believed to the supremacy of Russian influence at Teheran, has not hitherto been accepted by the Shah. Major Smith believes that the opening of the Karun, unaffected as it would be by any possible increase in existing Turkish transit duties, would render permanent the present temporary diversion of traffic from the north to the south of Persia.

O. T. B.

India Office,
13th August 1878.

RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA.

(No. 2.)

* In continuation of Colonel Burne's Note of 13th August 1878.

OBJECT OF NOTE.—The object of this Note is to trace, as briefly as practicable, the course of events since the autumn of 1878,* leading up to the present renewed activity of Russia in the Turkoman country, and on the northern frontier of Persia.

† Colonel Burne's Note, No. 1, p. 13.

‡ Prince Gortchakow to Count Schouvaloff, 5th April 1875.

§ Earl of Derby to Lord A. Loftus, 25th October 1875.

GENERAL POSITION OF AFFAIRS IN CENTRAL ASIA UP TO 1878 INCLUSIVE.—Although the negotiations of 1869-73 between the English and Russian Cabinets terminated in the recognition of Afghanistan as a State outside the sphere of Russian action, and in a declaration from the Czar that there was no intention on his part of extending his empire further southwards, yet at no time did the Imperial authorities in Turkistan relax their activity on the Atrek. As will be gathered from my former Note,† the somewhat exaggerated reports in 1875 of Russian designs on Merv gave rise to an interchange of views on the subject between Count Schouvaloff and the Earl of Derby, followed by a diplomatic note from Prince Gortchakow,‡ intimating, or rather again reiterating, the Czar's resolution not to extend the frontier of Russia beyond its present limits "either on the side of Bokhara or on that of Krasnovodsk and the Atrek." Afghanistan was a State, it was again said, outside the sphere of Russian action, but Russia claimed full liberty of action over the countries intervening between that country and her own possessions in Turkistan. The British Cabinet§ viewed with some apprehension the policy of inaction which Prince Gortchakow apparently wished to force upon it by this declaration. As each successive advance of the Russian frontier towards Afghanistan involved complications which it was equally the interest of both England and Russia to avoid, and as the integrity of Afghan territory was an object to which Her Majesty's Government attached the highest importance, it became necessary at once to inform Prince Gortchakow that Her Majesty's Government reserved to themselves the most complete liberty of action, under all future contingencies, as to the measures which might, in their opinion, be necessary to secure that integrity.

But Russian activity was in no way arrested. While General Lomakin extended his operations during 1875-76 sufficiently far from Krasnovodsk to obtain the nominal submission of the Akhal Turkomans, General Kauffman, on his part, early

in the latter year, annexed Khokand; a marked *rapprochement* between the Governor General of Russian Turkistan and the Ameer of Afghanistan became also apparent about this period.

Under these circumstances Her Majesty's Government again protested* against General Lomakin's aggressive movements, and impressed on the Russian Government the evil consequences which would follow the occupation of Merv.

The Government of India† became alarmed on the same score. Lord Lytton's Government believed that Russia was steadily pursuing her fixed purpose of absorption of territory up to Afghanistan. In their view only three courses were, in their opinion, open to the British Government:—(1) a strong protest to Russia; (2) some arrangement with Persia‡ for the support of the Turkomans; (3) independent communication with the Turkomans by despatching one or two Officers to Merv to ascertain their real power of resistance.

Her Majesty's Government§ did not consider that the time had arrived for such definite action. Captain Napier was, however, allowed|| to proceed to Merv to ascertain the state of affairs in that locality.

Meanwhile the successful termination of the war with Turkey in the spring of 1878 gave a fresh impetus to Russian activity in the Turkoman country, while the Russian press was filled with projects, all having for their object an advance towards India. Four Russian¶ expeditionary columns, aggregating about 20,000 men, were forthwith organized and despatched towards the Oxus and Afghanistan with sealed orders; and in contravention of all Russian declarations** to the contrary General Stoletoff, attended by a large escort, reached Cabul in July 1878, on a special mission from the Czar to the Ameer Shere Ali.

This step gave rise not only to a remonstrance with Russia on the part of Her Majesty's Government,†† but eventually to war between England and Afghanistan. In consequence of Shere Ali's refusal to receive the Viceroy's envoy after he had welcomed the Russian mission, his country was invaded on the 21st November 1878; within a month the British Army occupied positions which placed Cabul at their mercy; the Russian mission retired hastily from Afghanistan; Shere Ali fled from his capital, and ultimately died on 21st February 1879; and Lord Lytton was able, after a successful course of military operations, to sign a treaty of peace and friendship with Yakooob Khan, the new Ameer of Afghanistan, which once and for all put an end to further Russian‡‡ interference in that country. The diplomatic defeat thus encountered by Russia was complete, but her activity in the Turkoman country remained unaltered.

RUSSIAN MOVEMENTS IN THE TURKOMAN COUNTRY.—Towards the end of July 1878, a Russian column of 2,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry

* Lord A. Loftus, 9th June 1877.

† Government of India Letter, 2nd July 1878, p. 18 of Note No. 1.

‡ This would, in their opinion, be of no value until British influence at Teheran were restored, and establishments of British Agents, with suitable escorts, at Meshed or Sarakhs were agreed upon, besides free access to Merv through Persian territory.

§ Lord Salisbury to Viceroy, No. 68, Secret, 18th October 1877, p. 27. Note No. 1.

|| This journey he was ultimately unable to accomplish.

¶ See Note, No. 1, p.

** Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, 3rd July 1878, p. 43 of Note No. 1.

†† Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Plunket, 14th August 1878. No. 49 of Note No. 1.

‡‡ NOTE.—A separate note on this subject will be submitted.

* See Note 1, pp. 16 and 35. Captain Napier's Report of May 1879.

left Krasnovodsk for Byat-Haji,* the lowest point of the Atrek at which the banks become practicable. Camels constituted the transport of this column; for supplies it was dependent on its sea base; the rations for the men consisted of black bread, tea, or coffee, Liebig's soup, and compressed vegetables, in addition to such quantities of fresh meat and corn as were procurable on the spot; tents for the whole force were carried on camels. Byat Haji was reached on the 8th of August; thence the column advanced along the right bank of the Atrek to Chat, and ultimately turned northwards over the lower spur of the Soong Dagh, reaching a point called Band-i-Hassun, 12 miles from Bami, whence it ultimately returned to Krasnovodsk. A portion of the force was retained at Chat and Chiliskar; Byat-Haji was left unoccupied; the cavalry of the force returned to the Caucasus, and General Lomakin was summoned to Tiflis.

† Michell's Abstracts for 1879, No. V. Communicated to the *Kavkaz*, No. 272, 2nd (14th) December 1878, from Krasnovodsk, dated 8th (20th) October 1878.

The following extract† from a Russian newspaper affords some information as to the objects and results of the expedition:—

“The usual annual expedition was this year sent to the confines of the Téké country. The force being rather a large one it was concluded that the object of the expedition was the long looked for occupation of Téké, that troublesome nest of robbers who agitate all the neighbouring populations, and prevent the traffic along the Khiva-Krasnovodsk route. It was also considered that the advance of the Krasnovodsk column was in connection with the movements of General Kaufmann's Turkestan troops. Be that, however, as it may, the detachment was equipped, and by the end of August (O. S.) it found itself at the base of the mountains separating us from the Turkomans.

“We were encamped several days, and were visited by Goklans of the neighbourhood, who brought us various provisions, as well as by Téké Khans, with their usual professions of amity and promises to supply us with all necessaries.

“Our force was preparing for its homeward march, when suddenly, on the night of the 7th (19th) September, it was roused by the whistling of a bullet over the tents; the alarm was instantly given, the men seemed delighted at the chance of having a little firing. But the shot was succeeded by a dead silence. Two hours later a couple of shots were more distinctly heard. These were fired by our sentinels to give warning of the approaching enemy, who in his advance raised a dust which was discernible, although it was still night. An artillery fire advised the enemy that we were not asleep, but expected him. Checked by our fire, the Tékés did not molest us again until the morning. In the morning our detachment commenced its returned march, but we had not gone two versts before we observed a large body of horsemen galloping up to the place where we had bivouacked, and then hastening to cut us off,—our detachment marching

through a narrow defile. Small parties of men soon made their appearance on various sides and opened fire on our column, but a successful fire from our sides compelled these bold Turkomans to keep at a respectful distance. The pursuit by the Tékés was continued on the 9th (21st), but an ambush of Cossacks who sent some telling shots among them made them cease their pursuit.

“On the 15th (27th) of September the detachment reached Chat, where it was determined to build a fort for a permanent garrison.

“Chat is at the confluence of the Sumbar with the Atrek.”

It was generally believed at the time that General Lomakin's retreat was forced by Turkoman attacks, but it is now understood that it was directed in consequence of peremptory orders on the subject from the Czar. On this point, Captain Napier writes:—

“The cause of the retreat* from Band-i-Hassan being neither want of supplies nor sickness in the camp, as I believe, remains open to conjecture. The opinion that I have come to is, that it was due to or in pursuance of orders received by Lomakin, when halting at Band-i-Hassan. In support of this I may mention, for what it is worth, the following incident. While conversing with the Bujnurd Chief and some Turkomans, one of his followers who had lately been in the Russian camp was introduced, and told to relate for my benefit what he had seen of the condition of the force. In the course of his report, I caught a casual expression referring to the receipt of letters by Lomakin, and on inquiry was informed that the day previous to the retreat, which took place at daybreak of the fifth day of the halt, letters had been received which it soon became known were orders for the return of the force. Previous to this, the Chief had been himself at a loss to account for so sudden a retreat, and he at once suggested that there had been a change of plans at St. Petersburg, which he, not unnaturally, attributed to the action of our Government. His Turkoman guests left fully impressed with the belief that we had interposed in their favour—an impression that it would have been useless for me to attempt to remove.”

The true object of this expedition was, no doubt, a definite aggressive movement on the Akhal country in anticipation of a general advance of the Russian columns afore mentioned towards Afghanistan, but the whole movement was foiled by the prompt action of the English Cabinet, which at once put an end to any hope Russia may have entertained of being able without hindrance to absorb the countries lying between her frontier and that of Afghanistan, securing, in all probability, the connivance of Persia† by promises of Herat. On the object of Russian operations at this time Captain Napier writes:—“The manner of the return of the expedition gives, I think, a tolerably

* Captain Napier's Report of May 1879.

† See Lord A. Loftus' opinion on this subject, 24th November 1874, p. 12, Note, No. 1.

clear indication of its true object. The Consul Bakouline, and other Russian officers whom I met, pretended to regard it as a mere reconnaissance, a *promenade militaire*; but there is sufficient in the information which I have given above to show that it was more probably a definite aggressive movement of a tentative character, a feint, which would have been converted into a real attack, and an occupation of the Atak, and probably of Herat, in the event of a war with England and a defensive alliance with the Ameer.

"It would clearly, I think, have been worth the while of the Russian Government to risk a small auxiliary force in Afghanistan for the sake of detaining in India the forces that might have been sent thence to Europe. The dates of the advance and retreat of the expedition appear to me not only to favour, but to point to such a conclusion. That the scheme was practicable I have also no doubt.

"Troops in any quantity required were ready in the Caucasus, and would have been landed in detachments as large as could be fed and passed up the country easily. The active co-operation of Persia was necessary; that it would then have been given I have no doubt. The slight mask that she wore would, on a declaration of war between Russia and England, have been cast off at once, and her aid would have gone far beyond the mere permissive instructions given to the border Chiefs.

"In this estimate I am guided, I should say, by the whole course of conduct, the tone, and the opinions of all the Persian officials with whom I came into contact, either directly or indirectly, and by these only. I had no extraneous sources of information."

At the close of this expedition (September 1878) the Russian force in the Trans-Caspian District consisted of two battalions of Infantry and two batteries of guns (about 2,500 men in all) distributed at Chát, Chikislar, and Krasnovodsk. No troops had, up to the middle of April 1879, been sent across the Caspian, or prepared for embarkation at either Baku or Petrofski, but Russian activity was in no way lessened.

The Russian press commented as follows:—

The "Russki Mir," No. 334, 6th (18th) December, observes that "Merv is not a position of any strategical value, and that if there was any talk of its occupation it was in view of a Russian advance towards Afghanistan, but to talk of the occupation of that robbers' nest as a means for the strengthening of Russian prestige in Central Asia is sheer folly."

The "Novoye Vremia," No. 998, 7th (19th) December, however, observes that while the occupation of Merv is not of immediate consequence, it is necessary that Russia should eventually effect it, otherwise Russia would not have that "scientific frontier" which Lord Beaconsfield has said is of

such great advantage; independent of this, Merv is a valuable post on the way to India.

The "St. Petersburg Gazette,"* proceeded to point out the necessity of strengthening the Russian position on the Oxus, which is calculated to serve as a basis of Russian operations in the event of an English invasion of Kashgar, Bokhara, and Turkestan, and for this purpose it was, in the first place, necessary to occupy Merv. It concludes as follows:—

"And now a word or two about Persia. Here we already feel the preponderance of English influence. It is not to be doubted that so soon as there shall no longer be an Afghanistan hostile to England between her Indian possessions and Persia, the Shah will pause to consider into whose embraces he should throw himself. It would not be amiss to take advantage of the favourable moment to show the Shah how much easier it is for him to entangle himself in the British web which is stretched over nearly the whole of Asia."

In March 1879 General Lomakin was withdrawn from the command of the Trans-Caspian district, and retained merely as Commandant† of Krasnovodsk; he was superseded in command by General Lazaref, an Armenian, who started in life as a tailor, continued it as a soldier, and rose up to his present rank through his own merits.

General Lazaref‡ reached Chikislar on the 21st March, and at once summoned all the Chiefs and Elders of the Jaafar Bai Turkomans; he told them that he was about to command an expedition which would last for six years, going through the Tékké country, and by the road which had been selected by M. Bakouline in his journey to Afghanistan; he called upon them to furnish 1,000 horsemen, to release any Persian prisoners in their possessions, and to supply camels for transport. He was about, he said, to leave for Tiflis, but would soon return with a large force. His stay at Tiflis was not prolonged, for he left again for Baku early in May,§ together with Colonel Malana, Chief of the Staff, and Colonel Grodefsk, who journeyed last year from Mazar-i-Charif through Herat and Khorassan.

About this time the Astrabad Agent|| reported that two regiments of Russian infantry, each 1,000 strong, had landed at Chikislar, and that 20 more regiments were expected.

The Russian press announced that the motive for this activity was the protection of certain scientific expeditions about to be despatched to explore the Oxus, &c.¶ The "Moscow Gazette" of the 10th (22nd) April 1879, said:—

"A short time ago the foreign papers, and especially English journals, were full of the intelligence of preparations at Baku of a military expedition, to be conducted by General Lazaref. It was asserted that the object of the expedition was an attack on Merv, and it was said that General Lomakin, who had in the past year marched into

* No. 349, 19th (31st) December 1879, No. 4, *Michell's Abstract*.

† Captain Swain, No. 57, of 26th March 1879.

‡ Foreign Office to India Office, 10th April 1879.

§ Captain Napier's Note of May 1879.

¶ Mr. Ronald Thomson to Marquis of Salisbury, No. 109, 30th April 1879.

§ "Golos" of 5th (17th) May 1879, *Michell's Abstract*, No. 36.

|| Mr. Ronald Thomson, No. 82, of 29th March 1879.

¶ *Michell's Abstract*, No. 30 of 1879.

the Téké country, had left two small detachments at points only a few marches distant from Merv, to the relief of which the troops now gathering at Baku were about to be sent. It was also added, that a force assembling at Chardjui was also advancing from the Turkestan province. The force under General Lazaref alone was said to number 20,000 bayonets, an unexampled figure in our previous Trans-Caspian campaigns, and a very improbable one.

“But these foreign journals very soon began to contradict their own statements; it appears that General Lomakin had not left any detachments last year in the vicinity of Merv, and that he had halted with all his troops at a considerable distance from that place in the Turcoman country. It was then announced that the expedition to Merv had been countermanded, that there had not been any serious intention to march to Merv, and that the matter referred only to a punitory expedition against the Téké Turcomans.

“We have lately seen announcements in Russian papers relative to the preparations for an expedition into the Téké oasis with the object of curbing the semi-nomad tribes. This expedition is said to have been called for by some reverses which General Lomakin is believed to have sustained last year. We have no accurate or circumstantial information on the subject of these preparations, but it is known to everybody that the Tékés have long provoked us. In the year 1873 they attacked our rear detachments on their way back from Khiva across the Kizyl-Kum desert; they even captured one or two Russian soldiers, and refused to deliver them up to us. The Tékés are constantly plundering our caravans passing between Krasnovodsk and Khiva. About a year ago they were so audacious that they attacked a caravan at Balakly, in the Uzboi, only 70 versts from Kuna-Urgendj. Last summer, when General Lomakin’s detachment was on the march, they attacked the troops and attempted even to cut off that General’s communications, although he had no hostile designs against them. In a word, we have old scores to settle with the Tékés, and their pacification is a necessary condition for the safeguarding of the Trans-Caspian steppes and of the oasis of Khiva itself.

“The expedition to the country of the Turcomans has an aim quite independent of an aggressive advance on Merv. The Turcomans of Merv are not at all so liable to fall into the hands of Russia from the side of the Tékés. It is a mistaken notion that the most convenient route to Merv for Russian troops lies through the oasis of the Tékés. Merv is considerably nearer to the Oxus than to the Caspian, and is in an equal measure separated by a sandy waste from the Téké lands as from the Oxus. From the Caspian Russian troops would have to march some hundreds of versts

through the narrow belt of verdant Téké country, having no secure communications, and after passing this oasis they would be obliged to enter the arid desert between the Tajik and the Murgh-ab, where there are no wells. From Chardjui, or rather from Hadji-Kunduz, there is a road to Merv, abundantly supplied with water, with wells every ten or even five versts; the villages around Chardjui have large stores of grain. If we entertained any serious design against Merv, we should certainly commence by establishing a *point d'appui* at Chardjui.

“The military expedition proceeding to the Téké country has the object mainly of affording protection to the scientific expeditions which are being despatched for the purpose of studying the diversion of the Oxus into the Uzboi, and of surveying all the old channels of that river. The old question of this great artery of Central Asia is approaching a solution. A scientific expedition on a large scale is about to leave St. Petersburg. From Samara a private party, equipped by a society which has recently been organised, is also going out to study the subjects of the Oxus and of a Central Asian railway. The Government expedition will of course have a military escort, but the best protection will be afforded by the column whose object it is to keep the Tékés within the confines of their own oasis.

The “St. Petersburg Gazette,”* 27th February (11th March) said, in reference to the report circulated by the English papers on the subject of a contemplated junction of a force of 20,000 Russian troops from Baku under General Lazaref, and of General Kaufmann’s forces in the neighbourhood of Khiva:—

“This intelligence moves our curiosity, because nothing has happened in Turkestan to call for such a large reinforcement as is implied by the report. Perfect tranquillity prevails in Khiva, as also among the Chaudor, Yomud, and other Turcomans, who were pacified in 1873 by Generals Golovachef and Ivanof. The Khan of Khiva is unremitting in his endeavours to please the Russian Government when any opportunity offers. He rendered every assistance, for example, to the Russian expedition to the Urun-Daria for the survey of the ancient course of the Oxus. His friendliness and sincerity were so potent that General Kaufmann found it consistent with his duty to bring his services to the Imperial notice, in consequence of which the Khan was presented with the order of St. Stanislaus of the first rank, set in diamonds, which was conveyed to him by Colonel Meyer. At the present time the Khan is aiding us in our investigation into the causes of the rupture of the Oxus dams, and in our endeavours to refill the Sary-Kamysh lakes.

“Our relations with the Turcomans in our close proximity are also satisfactory. The Salar Turcomans near Chardjui have repeatedly applied to

* Michell’s Abstract, No. 26, of 21st March 1879.

General Kaufmann to prevail upon the Amir of Bokhara to abstain from oppressing them, the Yomuds. The Governor General of Turkestan readily complied with their request, and the Amir of Bokhara at once attended to his representations. The Yomuds likewise appealed to General Ivanof to settle their disputes with the Khan of Khiva by arbitration, when the Khan of Khiva in his turn also expressed his readiness to abide by General Ivanof's decision. In extending the survey of the ancient bed of the Oxus in the direction of the Turcoman lands (Khiva) the Yomuds and Chaudors showed no inimical disposition towards the Russians.

“ But to the best of our knowledge our relations with the Akhal-Téké in the trans-Caspian region are less satisfactory. General Lomakin has several times come into serious collision with those Turcomans at Kizyl-Arvat. But the force which is being concentrated at Baku cannot possibly be destined for a punitive expedition against the Akhal-Téké for their constant forays and attacks on the Turcomans of the Caspian coast, who are Russian subjects. The means already at the disposal of General Lomakin were sufficient for such a purpose.”

The “*Novoye Vremia*,” 28th February (12th March) observed that “ the report in the English papers is either incorrect, or the news is stale. General Lomakin conducted an expedition in the course of last year, 200 miles from the Caspian up the Atrek river, where he built a fort at Chát, which was necessary for the maintenance of tranquillity among the Téké. In all probability a similar expedition will be despatched this year, although we believe nothing has yet been arranged in respect to it. The security of the Atrek line for the purpose of tranquillizing the trans-Caspian Steppe is an absolute necessity to us, and this has nothing to do with any kind of designs against India.”

Our Military Attaché* at St. Petersburg learnt from good sources that the “ Russians are determined to reach Merv, although the attainment of that object would depend mainly on the attitude of Persia.” The Grand Duke Michael† left St. Petersburg for Tiflis about the first week in March, somewhat suddenly, to superintend the reorganization and to prepare the new expedition under General Lazaref, which was reported to be intended to make a push for Merv.‡ The Turkestan troops were to be augmented so as to place 40,000 men in the field at any moment, exclusive of garrisons. Five reserves were to be created in the Caucasus, a portion of which were to be always on a war footing.

At this time§ the Grand Duke Nicholas Constantinovitch, having for some years past made Central Asia his special study, published the result of his researches in the shape of a pamphlet which dwelt principally on the importance to Russia of the

* Captain Swain. Foreign Office to India Office, 11th April 1879.

† Captain Swain, No. 9, 12th March 1879. India Office to Foreign Office, 26th April 1879.

‡ Captain Swain, No. 19, of 30th April 1879. Foreign Office to India Office, 12th May 1879.

§ Foreign Office to India Office, 17th June 1879.

Oxus. The author dwells on the great advantages which Russia will derive from a resuscitation of Central Asia from its present lethargic and unproductive condition to its former state of prosperity. "By establishing good communications by rail or water," he says, "Russia will be able to regenerate the fertility of Turkestan, improve its commercial activity, and assume a firm and formidable position in the East."

In regard to the strength and other details of General Lazaref's expedition, Captain Napier writes:—*

* Captain Napier's Report of May 1879.

"Regarding the strength of the force there are two reports, differing slightly.

"One gives 20,000 infantry and three regiments of cavalry.

"The second, and the most exact and reliable, says that the force will consist of the whole of the 21st Division, which will be an addition of 14 battalions, or about 14,000 men, to the present force.

"The 21st Division is now cantoned at the points marginally noted in Dagestan, all within easy marching distance of the coast. The division is said to be a *corps d'élite*. I passed through most of its cantonments, and was much struck with the general hardy look and good physique of the men.

"A cavalry brigade was to consist of a regiment of Cossacks now in Talish, a regiment of Cossacks from Daghestan, and one regiment of Dragoons of the Caucasus.

"The total strength of this force would be about 10,000 men.

"At St. Petersburg I heard that a force of four divisions, each of 6,000 infantry, was ordered to be in readiness, one of the divisional commands having been already given to a Prince Dolgorouki.

"Lazaref is reported also to have been granted a sum of two million roubles, or about 200,000*l.*, for the expenses of the expedition, as a first instalment.

"I could hear of no contracts asked for or tendered, save one for the construction of 500 transport waggons at Baku. I was fortunate enough to meet and travel for a sufficient distance with one of the leading Armenian merchant of Tiflis, who would certainly have known if any other large contracts had been given out there or at Baku.

"I heard it also reported from several quarters that a cable is to be laid as soon as possible from Baku to Krasnovodsk, and I chanced to meet an English engineer in the Russian service who was in expectation of orders to go at once to test a cable for the Caspian which had been purchased. He estimated the cost at about 65,000*l.*

"In addition to many vague reports there was a noticeable stir in military circles. Last year's expedition was talked of as a reconnaissance preparatory to the present projected advance, and the ultimate destination of the force was believed to be

Afghanistan, which shows at least the light in which the army regards the action of its Government."

• "Standard" of 1st July 1879.

The Berlin correspondent of the "Standard" reports as follows:—

"On 18th June 1879 the vanguard of General Lazaref's expedition reached Dusulum, at the confluence of the rivers Sumbar and Tchandar, 150 kilometres north-east from Tchikishlar. Accordingly, the idea of operating in the Atrek valley has been abandoned. The troops are marching north upon Kizil-Arvat, whence, wheeling about to the east, they will proceed along the northern slopes of the Kopet Dag, occupying as they go to the forts and settlements on the ancient Perso-Turkoman frontier. By this systematic procedure it is intended to gradually seize all the arable land in the possession of the Téké Turkomans, stretching from Kizil-Arvat to Artuk on the eastern extremity of the Kopet Dag, and from Artuk to Merv. The distance from Dusulum to Kizil-Arvat is 120 kilometres, from Kizil-Arvat to Artuk 420 kilometres, and from Artuk to Merv 130 kilometres. So far as is known, the country along the line of route is an open tolerably well-watered plain, and offers no obstacles to the march of European troops. If the expedition succeeds, the most warlike tribe of Central Asia will share the fate of their Kirghese brethren, and undergo conversion into Cossack pulks. As the Russians have about 30,000 men on and near the spot, the issue of the campaign entirely depends upon the question whether the breechloaders recently displayed by the Téké have been procured in sufficient quantity to render defence practicable. According to rumours current at Tchikishlar, a discussion has arisen between the western Turkomans and those of Merv, which augurs well for the result of the campaign. That the western Turkomans will do their utmost to resist the Russians is expected both in the camp and at St. Petersburg."

† Captain Napier's Note of May 1879.

In regard to the objects of General Lazaref's expedition, Captain Napier says:—†

"The present hold on the trans-Caspian is to be maintained and strengthened, and there are many indications that designs are entertained embracing an early advance in force on the Atak line towards Herat if the state of affairs in Europe, or of our relations with Afghanistan, should advise and encourage such a project. The first project involves the occupation of further strategic points, the subjugation of the Akhal, and the improvement of communications between Krasnovodsk and the Atak, and Chikishlar and the Atak, including the probable though not absolutely necessary acquisition of some convenient point on the shores of Ashurada Bay, or of a right to use such a point. It may be accomplished leisurely, with existing arrangements and establishments, and without

much cost. The action of the Persian Government, save in regard to Gez, is immaterial,* and the Turkoman difficulties may be estimated very low."

"We have already seen a force of about two thousand men holding, nearly unmolested, the whole line from the sea to Chát, at a time when both the Tekeh and the independent Yamúts might be supposed to have received every encouragement to hostility."

"A further force of 3,000 to 4,000 men would, I believe, suffice to hold the whole line as far as Ishkabad; their chief posts being at that place and Geuk Tapa. The difference in the cost of maintaining such a force on that line and in the Caucasus would not be prohibitive."

"The cost of carriage employed last year for three months I estimate at about 100,000 roubles, or 10,000*l.*, which sum would approximate to the cost of keeping the advanced stations supplied for the same length of time with what they did not find in the country, and would almost represent the difference in the cost of their maintenance. This might be gradually reduced by the application of less costly transport in the shape of waggon trains as already projected. Judging from the cost at which good shelter is provided at Krasnovodsk, even if the troops could not summer in Turkoman tents, or on the high cool plateau of the Soong Dagh and Kuren Dagh, a year would suffice to give them permanent shelter at the four principal points, at an expenditure of about one million roubles, or 100,000*l.* The cost of improved communications would be a large and increasing item, if Russia intends to put her acquisition to any practical political use, but after the first cost of the telegraph land lines, and of the cable, which have already been determined on, it would not be large, and certainly, I think, not prohibitive. The country is carriageable throughout. The construction of defensible posts and digging wells would be the principal work. For transport across the Caspian the ordinary means would suffice. If such a leisurely advance be the course adopted, I think it may be accepted that the cost no more than Turkoman resistance or Persian neutrality may be relied on to prevent it, and we may within two years expect to see a line of Russian posts connected with the sea by telegraphs, and roads extended as far as the Deregez Atak, and possibly connected by another line of posts with Merv and the Government of Turkestan."

"The existing transport on the Caspian consists of 20 line steamers, of which 17 are now afloat, four private trading steamers, and eight war sloops, all of an average carrying capacity of 350 men.

"A force of 20,000 men might, by these existing means, be landed at Chikishlar in three months.

"If Persia should be found willing to give supplies freely, a force of 10,000 men might be placed within reach of Herat in about six months. If she were forced to maintain an attitude of

* "Immaterial as regards the question of supplies. The refusal of Persia to give supplies will only check and add greatly to the cost of the Russian advance, but she has it in her power to prohibit absolutely, for a long time to come, any march along her northern border, by a hostile demonstration from the Bujnurd or Kuchan States. Such step, which would only be made (conceivably) with the moral support of England, would become, under such circumstances, a very effective threat."

neutrality, and the sale of grain were thus restricted, from nine to twelve months would, at least, be required. The ultimate maintenance of an occupying force would, beyond its cost, offer no difficulty, for the northern districts of Khorassan alone produce enough to feed a force of 20,000 to 25,000 men, in ordinary years.

“Almost a prime necessity of such a movement would be the acquisition of Gez, and any determined efforts to obtain it may be taken as an evidence of wide aggressive intentions.

“I would judge from the present state of Lazareff’s preparations that the advance of a small force having Geuk Tapa or Ishkabad as its objective could not take place before the end of June, and the advance of the first detachments of a large column before end of September.

“The snowfall in the Atak and on the Kuren Dagh being ordinarily very light, winter would not necessarily interfere with the movement.

“Whether the annexation of the Atak be made slowly or quickly seems to me, however, in view of ultimate results nearly immaterial.

“Sooner or later Russia will be found in possession of a line of communication that will place Herat practically in her hands, for the facilities it offers will enable her always to outnumber us there, and will give her, in fact, as regards the north of Afghanistan, the superiority that we now have as regards the south.”

* “Times” of 10th July 1879.

In a letter from Berlin of the 8th July,* it is said:—

“What I telegraphed to you the other day as being the well-founded suspicion of the “Golos” with reference to the true aim of the Russian military expedition which lately started from the south-eastern shore of the Caspian is confirmed, with copious and candid details by the St. Petersburg correspondent (who is a Russian) of the “Nord-deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung” here, a paper which seeks to harmonize the character of its communications from abroad with those received at home, and the latter for the most part are either authoritative or inspired. The correspondent, in a letter published this evening, frankly confesses that General Lazareff, the hero of Aladja and Kars, is commissioned to capture and destroy Merv, the capital of the Tekke Turkomans. This town has its seat among the steppes and sandy deserts bounded on the north by the Kara Kura, on the west by the Kopet hills, by the Afghan mountains on the south, and by the Amu-Daria or Oxus on the east. Connected with Merv through an imperfect line of defence are the townlets of Codshat, Abula, Kandshukalan, and Naukilia, all these together forming a quadrilateral within which the affairs of the tribe are administered. From this quarter, continues the Russian correspondent, the brave but barbarous Tekinze direct their raids, sometimes crossing the Oxus in boats and plundering the territory of

Khiva and Bokhara, sometimes bursting into the rich and fair Persian province of Khorasan. The Turkomans, though living under Russian protection, are not spared by these marauders, who do not confine themselves merely to lifting cattle, but even steal men, many Persians pining away their lives in cruel captivity among them. The women and children carried away by them are sold in Afghanistan and Bokhara. The Persians, observes the Russian writer, have in vain sought to settle accounts with these inveterate thieves and scoundrels, but though their troops have on several occasions pressed on towards Merv, they have either been wholly annihilated or have had to retreat with great loss. What, however, the Persians could never accomplish the Russian Government has determined summarily to achieve, and put a stop, once for all, to the intolerable state of things existing thereabouts by destroying Merv, that den of rapacious robbers. The troops appointed to perform this task under General Lazareff belong exclusively to the army of the Caucasus, and after assembling at Baku were carried across the Caspian in steamers to Tchikislar, near the mouth of the Atrek. The infantry, consisting of 16 battalions, is commanded by Major-General Borch, while Prince von Wittgenstein Berleburg has charge of the cavalry, numbering two squadrons of Dragoons, 21 sotnias of Cossacks, and five sotnias of Turkoman volunteers of the tribe of Jernude, implacable foes of the Tekinze. The artillery force is made up of 36 light guns, of which four are manned by mounted Cossacks, under the command of Colonel Prosorkenitsch, the chief of the staff being Colonel Malama. The commissariat train necessary for the purposes of this formidable force includes 15,000 camels and 6,000 draught horses, one of the reasons which detained the expedition so long at Tchikislar being that the drivers, &c., had first to be provided with tough and long-enduring Turkoman steeds. As long as this expeditionary force can march in the neighbourhood of the Atrek, which forms the boundary between Persia and Russia, their difficulties will not be very great. Leaving the course of that stream, however, the troops must cross the the Kopet hills, on the easterly slopes whereof lie several Tekinze settlements, such as Aschabad, Tiarnaschik, Giaurs, Bab-Durma, &c., and here violent resistance may be expected from the enemy. It will be necessary, however, for General Lazareff to attempt reaching Tschardi and Miania, where the sand desert intervening between these places and Merv territory has the shortest diameter—namely, 30 versts, or two days' march. It is calculated that the distance from Tchikislar to the sources of the Atrek is 350 versts, from there to Miania 290 versts, and thence to Merv 150 versts, or in all about 790. The Russian correspondent (Russian in nationality, I repeat) from whom I quote these particulars, concludes by assuring 'our English friends' that fresh conquests are no

wise intended. The possession of Merv, he says, is not at all essential to the security of the Russian position in Central Asia, apart from which the annexation of this nest of robbers would entail expenses little calculated to bring any adequate return to the Empire. Thus, it may now be taken for granted that the Muscovites are marching with all possible energy on Merv, and though it is undoubtedly true that a candid foe is much better than a false friend, I would beg you to recall, for the sake of historical parallel, if nothing else, the circumstances which attended the conquest of Khiva, and to reflect that the Russians went out to battle against that independent Khanate with precisely the same object as that ostensibly held in view by them now, in advancing on a point which, by its geographical position, forms the north-western key to Afghanistan."

* These remarks are not intended to be anything more than a brief epitome of a history which might fill volumes.

† Aitchison's Treaties, Vol. VI., p. 379.

PERSIA AND HER ATTITUDE.*—The first treaty between England and Persia was signed in 1801.† In that instrument it was stipulated that "as long as the sun, illuminating the circle of the two great contracting powers, shines on their sovereign dominions, and bestows light on the whole world, the beautiful image of excellent union shall remain fixed on the mirror of duration and perpetuity, the thread of shameful enmity and distance shall be cut, conditions of mutual aid and assistance between the two States shall be instituted, and all causes of hatred and hostility shall be banished." By this treaty the Shah was to lay waste the country of the Afghans if ever they should invade India, and to prevent the French from settling in Persia; whilst the British Government was, in case of necessity, to assist the Shah with material aid.

Five years afterwards war between Persia and Russia changed the aspect of affairs. Worsted by Russia and deserted by England the Shah now courted the French alliance, and British influence lost ascendancy at Teheran. This roused us to fresh activity, which resulted in another treaty, signed in 1814,‡ by which the Shah engaged not to allow any European armies to enter Persian territory or to proceed towards India, and to use his best endeavours to induce the Kings or Governors of Khiva, Turkestan, Bokhara, and Samarcand, to resist any invader. The British Government was, in case of unprovoked invasion of Persian territory, to send officers, men, and war matériel, to the Shah, besides paying to him an annual subsidy of 200,000 tomans (80,000*l.*). Twelve years after this period, viz., in 1826, on the outbreak of war between Russia and Persia, the latter claimed from England the promised assistance in money and arms; it was refused on the plea that Persia had provoked the war; Persia was thereupon compelled to make peace, and to cede some of her fairest provinces to Russia, whilst we bought off the inconvenient article of 1814,

‡ Aitchison's Treaties, Vol. VI., p. 392.

stipulating for the assistance thus refused, by a single payment of 200,000 tomans.

British ascendancy at Teheran became again minimized, whilst Russia lost no time in encouraging the Shah to reconquer Afghanistan, and the other provinces once under Persian rule, up to the Indus. At the same time an understanding between England and Russia was arrived at (1834) by which they both agreed to respect the integrity of Persia. The intriguing influence of Russia, however, led, in 1837, to the siege of Herat by the Shah, ending, happily, in the entire defeat of the Persian forces, through the energy and ability of Pottinger. Eleven years afterwards, viz., in 1848, the present Shah of Persia, Nasir-ud-din, ascended the throne. We forced him, some years after his accession, amidst signs of great irritation at his Court, to sign an agreement binding Persia not to interfere with Herat; an agreement which was broken in 1856 by the occupation of that place by a Persian army, following an open insult to the British Minister at Teheran. War between England and Persia was thereupon declared (1st November 1856), and after a brief campaign was terminated by the Treaty of Paris (4th March 1857) which bound Persia once more to relinquish Herat.* Persia was loth, however, to give up her schemes of aggrandisement, and quietly turned her attention to the districts south of Herat. The next few years were, therefore, marked by encroachments on her part, not opposed by England, in Seistan and Khelat. To put an end to these encroachments, which were becoming excessively inconvenient, the boundaries between Khelat and Afghanistan on the one hand, and Persia on the other, were, with the consent of all parties, demarcated in 1870-71 by a British Commission, the awards in either case being favourable to Persia. Seistan was a province she much coveted, its possession had for many years been a source of rivalry between her and Afghanistan, both powers were aware of its strategical importance to the holder of it, and both hoped for a decision in its favour. That decision, however, divided Seistan between them, the fairest portion remaining to Persia then in actual occupation.

So matters went on till 1873-74, when Russian encroachments on the Atrek again drew attention to Persia. The Shah had, in an autograph letter, written in 1873, represented to the British Minister at Teheran the danger of Merv falling to Russia, and suggested that England should give Persia her moral and material support. He repeated these representations to Lord Granville during his visit to London in that year, but to no avail. The British Government did not care to commit itself to a Persian alliance; it preferred, with some show of reason, to deal directly with Russia, by diplomatic exchanges of views. In the correspondence that ensued the Russian Cabinet admitted† the vitality of the understanding of 1834 as to the integrity of Persia.

* *Treaty of Paris, 4th March 1857.*

“ Article 6.

“ His Majesty the Shah of Persia agrees to relinquish all claims to sovereignty over the territory and city of Herat and the countries of Afghanistan, and never to demand from the Chiefs of Herat, or of the countries of Afghanistan, any marks of obedience, such as the coinage, or “ Khooteh,” or tribute.

“ His Majesty further engages to abstain hereafter from all interference with the internal affairs of Afghanistan. His Majesty promises to recognize the independence of Herat and of the whole of Afghanistan, and never to attempt to interfere with the independence of those States.

“ In case of differences arising between the Government of Persia and the countries of Herat and Afghanistan, the Persian Government engages to refer them for adjustment to the friendly offices of the British Government, and not to take up arms unless those friendly offices fail of effect.

“ The British Government, on their part, engage at all times to exert their influence with the States of Afghanistan to prevent any cause of umbrage being given by them, or by any of them, to the Persian Government; and the British Government, when appealed to by the Persian Government, in the event of difficulties arising, will use their best endeavours to compose such differences in a manner just and honourable to Persia.

“ Article 7.

“ In case of any violation of the Persian frontier by any of the States referred to above, the Persian Government shall have the right, if due satisfaction is not given, to undertake military operations for the repression and punishment of the aggressors; but it is distinctly understood and agreed to that any military force of the Shah which may cross the frontier for the above-mentioned purpose shall retire within its own territory as soon as its object is accomplished, and that the exercise of the above-mentioned right is not to be made a pretext for the permanent occupation by Persia, or for the annexation to the Persian dominions, of any town or portion of the said States.”

† See Colonel Burne's Note, 19th November 1872.

‡ Lord Granville to Minister at Teheran, 2nd July 1873.

Earl of Derby to Lord A. Loftus, 16th December 1874.

• Mr. Thomson, No. 136 of 25th June 1874.

The British Minister at Teheran* was, however, ill at ease, and recommended strongly that some material aid should be given to Persia, for the purpose of preventing Russia from acquiring Merv, in the shape of British Officers to reorganize her army, a measure which might, in Mr. Thomson's view, lead eventually to a subsidy, and an offensive and defensive alliance.

† Government of India, 7th June 1875.

The Government of India were generally opposed† to any idea of a Persian alliance. Lord Northbrook had but a poor opinion of Persia; no solid reliance could be placed on her as an ally, nor was England, in his opinion, in a position to guarantee her northern provinces against Russian attack. The opinions of the members of his Government were more or less divided on the subject, but ultimately all agreed that our best policy was to encourage Persia to open up her southern communications, and so introduce British influence from the south. This view was, on the whole, concurred in by the India Office,‡ and no time was lost by Her Majesty's Government in unavailing attempts to win over the Shah to it. But he has up to this time resisted all attempts made in this direction. The minutes of the members of the Indian Government on this subject are worthy of perusal, although too lengthy to be summarized in a paper of this character. It is noteworthy, however, that the importance of Afghanistan to India was dwelt upon by Lord Northbrook's Government, and that Lord Napier of Magdala was anxious to give Persia the friendship she sought and the assistance she needed in the shape of Officers; he would strengthen the Embassy at Teheran by well selected Indian officers, placing one at Teheran and one at Meshed, thereby rendering the task of the conquest of Persia, supported by a British contingent, and aided by British Officers and supplies, as difficult and exhaustive as the conquest of the Spanish Peninsula was to France.

‡ Sir L. Mallet to Foreign Office.

So matters remained till 1877, when further Russian encroachments on the Atrek gave fresh impetus to the question. Lord Lytton's Government§ drew attention once more to the importance of Merv, and to the necessity for an effort to restore British influence at Teheran, in order to arrest the process which was rapidly converting Persia into a State vassal to Russia. They promised a willing co-operation, even at some pecuniary sacrifice, in any really practical efforts to that end. No arrangement with Persia would be of practical benefit to India if it did not include the establishment of British Agents, with suitable escorts, at Meshed or Sarakhs, and free access to Merv; and they recommended that British influence be re-established in Persia by "assuring the Shah that His Majesty " will have adequate support from the British " Government in that opposition which Persia, if " thus supported, is best able to offer to Russian " encroachments in the direction of Merv."

§ Letter of 2nd July 1877.
Note No. 1, p. 18.

In the summer of 1878 the subject of the rela-

tions between England and Persia again occupied His Majesty's mind, and that of his advisers. In the course of several conversations Mr. Ronald Thomson* reminded the Foreign Minister that Persia herself was principally to blame for any coldness which might appear to exist towards her on the part of England; she had refused, for instance, to open the Karoon navigation to British commerce, although that measure had been pressed by us, and would have been of immense advantage to Persia. The Sepah Salar admitted that Persia was throwing away her opportunities, but bewailed her misfortunes in being, as he said, "thrown over" by England, who did everything for Turkey† and "nothing for Persia." These conversations were followed by an interview between Mr. Thomson and the Shah himself, during which the subject of Russian aggression was touched upon. The Shah said that Persia had always endeavoured to prevent Russian encroachment, although, finding himself unable‡ to offer any opposition she had agreed that the "Russians should take possession of the territory" up to the north banks of the Atrek, if they engaged "not to cross to this side." By renouncing her claim to the territory north of the Atrek, over which she had no direct authority, Persia considered that she would preserve the lands subject to her between the Atrek and Gurgan rivers, which might otherwise have been taken possession of by Russia; the time for action and for England to have concerted measures with Persia to induce the Russians to withdraw altogether from the Turkoman country was, His Majesty said, when Persia found herself forced to make that arrangement, but it was now "too late." Mr. Thomson observed, in reply, that the arrangement to which His Majesty alluded had been made without our knowledge, and was denied by Persia herself at the time. The Akhal country, which was now being attacked, was, however, equally claimed by Persia, and if she allowed it to be invaded or occupied without objection or remonstrance she might not only forfeit her right to that territory, but might be supposed to have ceded it to Russia. When the conversation turned upon the moral support of England His Majesty did not appear to care for it; he solemnly denied, however, the existence, up to this time, of any such agreement or understanding between Persia and Russia. In reference to the internal condition of Persia he hoped to initiate certain reforms, with the assistance of the British Government, but he "had not derived that support from England which he had hoped and expected to obtain."

The increase of Russian influence at Teheran§ had become unmistakeably apparent at this period; the Shah's second visit to Europe, from which he had just returned, visibly strengthened the friendly feeling with which he had long been actuated towards the Czar; the defeat of Turkey by the Russian forces, the enormous armaments and armies which the Shah saw in his journey through

* Mr. Ronald Thomson, No. 104, 23rd May 1878.

† Mr. Ronald Thomson, No. 121, 13th August 1878.

‡ Mr. Ronald Thomson, No. 123, of 14th August 1878.

§ Mr. Ronald Thomson, No. 160, 20th September 1878.

* A Letter, No. 130, dated 5th June 1879, from Mr. Ronald Thomson, says that the Shah has since his return from Europe become less temperate than the preservation of his health demands, and has become irritable and capricious.

† Mr. Ronald Thomson, No. 202, of 5th November 1878.

‡ Mr. Thomson, No. 210, of 14th November 1878.

§ Foreign Office to India Office, No. 154, 28th February 1879.

St. Petersburg,* and his cordial reception at the latter place, had all combined to impress him with the irresistible military power of Russia. This feeling extended to the Shah's entourage. Whilst the Czar had personally expressed to His Majesty the sense of the value he attached to his personal friendship and alliance, both the Shah† and his ministers had, on the other hand, been led to believe that England was indifferent alike to Persia and to her friendship.

In further conversations with the Persian Foreign Minister, in which Mr. Ronald Thomson impressed upon him how entirely Persia owed her territorial integrity to the past moral support of England, and how foolish she was to court the danger of attaching herself exclusively to Russia, the Sepah Salar acknowledged the truth of all that was said in this sense, and promised to impress it upon the Shah.

In a later interview between the Shah and Mr. Thomson,‡ His Majesty evinced great curiosity on the subject of the existing Afghan complications, and he hoped that when England had reduced Afghanistan, she would revert to the old arrangement, which was equally advantageous to Persia and to England, of establishing separate small States at Cabul, Candahar, and Herat.

While the Shah and his Ministers were anxiously discounting at Teheran the value of the English or Russian alliance, the Persian Minister in London evinced no less anxiety on the subject. In a conversation§ with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Malcom Khan averred that Persia was too weak to remain without a friend, and that the Shah was anxious to place the whole of his foreign policy under the guidance of England, if Her Majesty's Government were willing to give him a pledge of their good will. The policy pursued by England was, he said, bringing about the annexation of Merv, a measure which Persia could prevent with the assistance of England; the most obvious mode of rendering such assistance was by placing Herat in her hands; there were other means at hand, notably the provision of money to enable Persia to obtain more effective armaments. In short, said Malcom Khan, this was the critical moment, the point from which the policy of Persia must definitely turn towards Russia or England. Whilst Lord Salisbury promised consideration to Malcom Khan's representations, he reminded the Minister that Herat was regarded by Indian authorities as a point of great importance, and that they would look with misgiving at the occupation of it by a power which might not be able to throw off the control of Russia.

Following this representation of Malcom Khan, the Persian Foreign Minister earnestly brought the subject of Herat|| before his Chargé d'Affaires at Teheran. England had, by the treaty of 1857, obliged Persia, he said, to renounce her rights in Afghanistan, and her territorial claim to Herat; she had always felt exasperated at thus being de-

|| Mr. Ronald Thomson, No. 36, of 17th February 1879.

prived of Herat by England, and her recent want of cordiality was only to be attributed to that feeling; if England wanted to secure Persia in her interests she would do so by the cession of Herat; if this were done, Persia would solemnly bind herself to place her foreign relations in the hands of England, and to grant her internal privileges; she would further undertake not to allow any Russian agent, or traveller, or foreigner other than English, to reside in, or to visit, Herat.

Writing on the subject* of the general policy of England towards Persia, Mr. Ronald Thomson was of opinion that the result of the Turkish war had been undoubtedly prejudicial to our prestige at Teheran. Rightly or wrongly England had come to be considered in the East as the natural protector, as Russia was the natural enemy, of Turkey. When, therefore, the Russians attacked and defeated Turkey, it was supposed that motives only of self-protection prevented our coming to her rescue. Although our subsequent action at Berlin had the effect of curbing Russia, yet the result was not sufficiently appreciated to do away with the great effect of the Russian military successes. The Shah and his advisers had strong Russian proclivities, and were not well disposed towards England; this feeling was actively encouraged by the Russian legation at Teheran. On the other hand, the action pursued towards Afghanistan, the promptness of our movements, the success of our arms, and more than anything else the result obtained of the departure of the Russians from Cabul, and the refusal of the Emperor to assist the Ameer, had produced a marked reaction at Teheran in favour of England. To give a full and permanent effect to this feeling the British Government should, in Mr. Thomson's opinion, assume a commanding position towards Persia, which could be attained by holding Candahar with Herat as a separate principality subject to its paramount and exclusive influence. While a cession of Afghan territory, in the direction of Seistan, to Persia might not be without its disadvantages, the objections to the cession of Herat were overwhelming, inasmuch as Persia's occupation of that territory would eventually result in opening a door to Russia.

Persia was, no doubt, in Mr. Thomson's† opinion, anxious for an offensive and defensive alliance with England, but he could hardly advise that course. Unless, indeed, we were prepared to stipulate that Persia should put forward her claim to Akhal as an integral portion of her dominions, and were determined at the same time to support her in asserting that right by force of arms if necessary, an important object of that alliance, that of checking Russia's advance on Herat, would not be attained.

The question of a Russian advance on Merv now became of daily increasing interest at Teheran; events day by day disclosed the extensive preparations made by the Turkistan authorities into the Akhal country. Mr. Ronald Thomson,‡ in the

* Mr. Ronald Thomson to Marquis of Salisbury, No. 38, of 21st February 1879.

† Mr. R. Thomson, No. 39, of 22nd February 1879.

‡ No. 92, of 14th April 1879.

course of his communications with Her Majesty's Government, expressed his opinion that, failing (1) the possibility of placing Merv in the position of a dependency in Herat over which we should exercise a paramount and permanent influence, or (2) the alternative of making Merv a dependency on Afghanistan, that State being subject exclusively to our policy, we might possibly at this moment effect an arrangement by direct negotiations with Russia, on the base of our consenting not to occupy Herat on condition of her not occupying Merv or the Akhal country. If an arrangement of this nature could be effected, our presence in Afghanistan, the doubtfulness existing as to our intentions, and the anxiety felt by Russia as to their scope, might afford an opportunity for its accomplishment which would never arise again. Under such an arrangement both Powers might either recognize the independence of Merv or its dependence on Persia; the latter alternative would be, at all events, better than its direct occupation by Russia. By facilitating its undisturbed possession by Persia, we should, in Mr. Thomson's opinion, put that Power to a certain extent under an obligation to us, whilst at the same time we should earn the gratitude of the Turkomans for having intervened to preserve them from the dominion of Russia. The great importance of Merv to the Russians was now generally admitted, and it was of proportionate importance to England that Russia should not gain possession of that territory, an eventuality certain to occur unless we took measures to prevent it. The occupation of Akhal, although perhaps of less importance, would secure to Russia a very advantageous base of operations; the district of Kelat (a strong natural fortress, which might be rendered impregnable) would be open to her, and it was a significant fact that Sarakhs and Deregez, although governed by Persian governors and garrisoned by Persian soldiers, had been in recent Russian maps *both* placed outside the Persian frontier. In point of fact, established in Akhal, the Russian forces would be able at any moment by a *coup-de-main* to occupy Herat. If we were able to keep possession of Candahar the danger would be less threatening, but if we did not it would become imminent.

In a subsequent conversation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, His Highness* said that the Shah had expressed his fear that if Persia were to object to the Russian advance on Akhal, it would give umbrage to her. Would England, therefore, in such a case be prepared to protect Persia against Russian aggression? If, His Highness went on to say, England was prepared to undertake to defend Persia in the event of any wanton attack made upon her by Russia, to conclude, in fact, a defensive alliance with Persia, and place her in a similar position to that occupied by Turkey as regards protection and support, Persia, on her side, would object to the Russian occupation of Akhal, would

* Mr. Ronald Thomson, No. 48, 2nd March 1879.

refuse supplies to the Russian troops, would decline to employ Russian officers, would agree to consult England in all important matters, and would substitute English for Russian influence in the country. In short, provided that England engaged to defend Persia from attack and aggression by Russia, the Shah would undertake,—*

- (1.) To consult England, and act in accordance with her advice, in all future political and commercial relations with Russia.
- (2.) To act in conjunction with England, and in accordance with her wishes, in any action, military or diplomatic, which Her Majesty's Government might consider necessary to check Russian advance in the direction of Afghanistan.
- (3.) To give every facility for our trade; to concede the navigation of the Karoon, and similar privileges, and to place British commercial relations with Persia upon the most favourable footing.

In another conversation with Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Teheran, the Persian Foreign Minister, † in referring to Herat, said that all Persia wanted was a release from the engagement she had contracted with England under the 6th Article of the Treaty of 1857, by which she agreed to relinquish all claim of sovereignty over the territory and city of Herat. Persia could thus, at any moment, with the permission of England, take possession of it, inasmuch as the inhabitants were quite disposed to transfer their allegiance from Cabul. On being asked the result of his reference to the Shah in regard to the recent conversations held between them, the Persian Minister said that Persia was really very desirous to form an alliance of the nature he had indicated, but he did not consider that the Shah could properly offer conditions personally before ascertaining if they would be acceptable to England.

Meanwhile the Persian Government addressed notes to the Russian Legation at Teheran, remonstrating against any infringement of the sovereign rights of Persia at Karakala and elsewhere. The Shah had, moreover, written an autograph letter to his own Minister, explanatory of his personal views of the situation. As these communications are important, I submit them as follows, in full.

- (1.) *Autograph Letter from the Shah to the Sepeh Salar, Minister for Foreign Affairs. Received 5th May 1879. (Translation).*

I have read your report of the observations made by the English Chargé d'Affaires respecting the Russian expedition against the Akhal Turkomans, &c. Although this matter has already been frequently discussed, and replies given to his questions, as he has urgently repeated them, I write this to you briefly, and you can show it to him, and give him a copy if he wishes it.

In the first place, as regards this expedition of the Russians against the Akhal and Turkomans, I now state categorically and

* Mr. Ronald Thomson, No. 51, of 6th March 1879.

It appears from a subsequent Letter, No. 37, of the 13th of March 1879, that the Prime Minister had received no direct authority from the Shah to propose these terms.

† Mr. Ronald Thomson, No. 80, of 25th March 1879.

in the form of an oath that in no manner whatsoever has the Persian Government had any communication respecting, or share in, that matter, nor is there any secret agreement between them and the Russians on the subject.

Secondly, as the British Government considers the matter of so much importance, and so injurious to themselves, why, with all the adequate force they possess by land and sea, do they not take steps to prevent the Russians from undertaking this expedition against, and invasion of, the Turkomans? If it is of such importance and gravity, then it would be better for them to go to the root of the matter with all their force, and stop the Russians; and if it is not of that moment, and they think it unnecessary to do so, why make so much of a minor detail, and lead the Persian Government into discussions, at one time threatening and at another attributing hostile designs to them, and supposing that they are in league with the Russians?

This movement has nothing whatever to do with Persia. She looks on the question as serious and injurious to her interests, and yet she does not consider herself sufficiently strong to prevent Russia from carrying out her designs; and in that case, if England with her power cannot do so, how could Persia with hostility-producing representations, and other action savouring of enmity and unfriendliness towards Russia, do anything, when it could have no effect to prevent the invasion of the Turkoman territory, and would only excite the enmity and resentment of Russia towards herself, and that too without her having secured the protection and support of the British Government or any other power?

If the Russian Government offers money to the inhabitants of the Khorassan and other borders, and buys a few hundred pounds weight of grain, in the first place, Persia cannot, at a time of friendship and peace, forbid it, and say it shall not be bought by the one, or sold by the other; and, secondly, Persia has it not in her power to prevent it, for she would need to place a cordon of 10,000 troops, horse and foot, along the line of the Khorassan frontier to watch day and night with the object of preventing the sale of grain. Otherwise, with a simple prohibition, the thing would be impossible. People seeing money offered, and an opportunity, affording pecuniary advantage, within their reach, would find some means or other to send their surplus corn by unfrequented roads, and sell it secretly to the Russians. And then Russia could have procured the grain, and at the same time be in a position to make the useless prohibition imposed by Persia a pretext for injuring us.

Moreover, reliable information received from Baku shows that the Russians have prepared such quantities of supplies that it is not likely they will require any grain from Khorassan.

As I have already said, it would be better that the British Government, instead of discussing and pressing these minor and useless details, should, if they can, put a stop to the military movement of the Russians in this direction, so as to free themselves from these schemes.

For the matter of the Chargé d'Affaire's statement respecting the Yemut Turkomans of Astrabad, and their selling provisions and furnishing camels to the Russians for hire, &c., it is self-evident, and the English Government knows well, that these are lawless and refractory tribes who, although Persian subjects, are like the Caffres and Zulus of the Cape of Good Hope, paying little or no attention to the orders of the Government, and that they cannot be restrained from contumacious acts by the mere issue of a command. Otherwise it is certain that the Persian Government is not and never will be content that any of her subjects should hold intercourse with foreigners without the sanction of their own rulers.

I swear by God that all these statements are written with the utmost candour and sincerity, that they contain no inaccuracy, and that they are not made with any political design whatever, and if after this the British Government entertain or bear in their minds a single suspicion against Persia, they will be committing the greatest injustice.

(2.) *Letter written by the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Russian Legation, 11th May 1879. (Translation.)*

Several days ago, when intelligence was received that General Lazareff, the commander of the Russian expedition at Chekisklar, &c., in contravention of the sovereign rights of Persia demanded

a thousand horsemen from the Atabai and Jaferbai Turkomans, Persian subjects, to take service with them, and had given them to supply 300 camels, I mention the subject to you verbally, and you, in conformity with the rights of nations, agreed in all friendship and cordiality, to telegraph to Tiflis and St. Petersburg in order to cause him to desist from such conduct and action. This was a cause of satisfaction to me, but, according to fresh reports which I have received, the General continues to conduct matters as formerly, and has even taken to Chekishlar the families of those from whom he demanded camels, with the intention of keeping them there so long as he requires the camels for transport. He has also threatened the tribe with punishment should they disobey them.

Your own sense of propriety renders it superfluous for me to make any remark that such independent action on his part in Persian territory affects its sovereign rights, and do not coincide in the least with the assurances received by the Persian Government from that of Russia; your natural penetration and sense of justice with respect to the rights of nations will make you fully cognizant of the state of the question without my making any further statement. I have, therefore, to request of you to be good enough to report to and urge the case in the necessary quarters without delay, so that the General may be prohibited from acting as he is doing, as his deeds are opposed to the rights of nations, and cannot be allowed in any Government, and I also ask you to be so good as to inform me of the result.

(3.) *Memorandum sent by the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Russian Legation, 12th May 1878.—*
(*Translation.*)

Last year, when Russian troops were passing near Kareekala, although this Department, in a Memorandum to the Legation, dated the 5th September 1878, requested that orders should be issued to the effect that the troops in question were not, possibly in ignorance (of the fact of its being Persian territory), to interfere with that district and neighbourhood, and His Excellency the Russian Minister, in his reply of September,* which was written in French, reassured this Department in the following terms,—“The expedition of General Lomakine was solely undertaken for the suppression of the acts of brigandage and the depredations committed by the Tekke Turkomans which were obstacles to the establishment of commercial relations between Central Asia and the Eastern Coast of the Caspian. The military action to be undertaken by the General had only this object, and beyond this his duty would not allow him to go,”—this Department, having acquired complete confidence, in a Memorandum, dated the 20th September 1878, expressed its satisfaction in the friendship shown by the Legation. But now that Russian troops will this year again proceed in that direction, this Department has found it necessary, in addition to the assurance already received, and those conveyed to them in the Memorandum of His Excellency the Russian Minister, to emphasize the contents of the two Memoranda written by them on the 5th and 20th September, and most respectfully request the Russian Chargé d’Affaires to cause stringent instructions to be issued wheresoever he deems it requisite that no interference on the part of the Russian military authorities may take place in Kareekala and the plains belonging to it. It is evident that in view of his spirit of friendship he will not object to doing so.

* Date not given.

In a conversation which Count Schouvaloff had with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,† he gave assurances that the sole object of Russian movements on the Caspian were to effect a land communication by means of fortified posts between Krasnovodsk and Chikishlar. Lord Salisbury informed him that there were two points of view from which any expedition from the shores of the Caspian might meet with objections on the part of England. “Her Majesty’s Government,” he said, “would take exception to any operations by which Merv was menaced,” and would “object to any encroachments upon Persian territory.”

† Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Plunket, 16th May 1879.
Foreign Office to India Office, dated 22nd May 1879.

In reply, Count Schouvaloff said there was no intention of menacing Merv or advancing to its neighbourhood—in fact, the farthest point contemplated would be 250 kilometres (160 miles) from Merv. With reference to Persia, Russia had so strong an interest in maintaining good relations with Persia, that Her Majesty's Government might rest assured that no infringement of Persian rights was probable.

The changed aspect of affairs at this time in Afghanistan caused the Persian Government* to renounce any hope they may have once entertained of being allowed to occupy Herat, or any other portion of Afghan territory. Mr. Thomson believed, however, that, if he were able to announce to the Shah any prospect of territorial concession, he might possibly arrange that His Majesty should personally undertake to place British influence at Teheran on a more satisfactory footing, to follow our advice in matters connected with the advice of Russia, to dismiss the Russian officers now in the Shah's service, and to open the Karoon to general commerce.

The Russian Minister, who had just returned from the Caspian, informed† the Persian Minister at this time that General Lazareff's expedition would consist of 9,000 ‡ men, viz. :—

16 regiments on peace footing,
2 regiments of regular cavalry, 600 men each,
3 batteries of artillery of 12 guns each,
and that they were going to Akhal.

In a telegram§ received some days afterwards, Mr. Thomson reports having learnt that the Shah had lately said that Persia had been asleep with reference to Russian designs on her frontier; that her time was sure to come, and that some measures should be taken in self-defence. The Koochan Chief had been instructed to assure the Akhal Chiefs of the good will of Persia, counselling active resistance and deprecating submission; 20,000 tomans were ready for distribution among the tribes, as an earnest of Persian sympathy. It was in contemplation also, Mr. Thomson believed, to address the Russian Legation a further Note, stating "that Merv had always been claimed by Persia; that, some years ago, whilst asserting this right, she had lost an army, and undergone a disaster which had not yet been wiped out, and that she could not, under these circumstances, forego her claim to that territory."

In another telegraphic despatch, dated 23rd June 1879, Mr. Ronald Thompson reports that the Russian Minister at Teheran had, in a communication with the Persian Foreign Minister, used intimidating language, saying that, "whatever Persian action might be, the expedition would be carried out, but if that action was unfriendly, she would repent it."

On the 9th of July,|| the Persian Minister again assured Mr. Thomson that no secret understanding

* Telegram from Mr. Tylour Thomson, 15th May 1879.

Foreign Office to India Office, No. 367, 16th May 1879.

† Mr. R. Thomson, Teheran, 6th June 1879.

‡ Consul Churchill reports from Russian sources (Mr. Thomson, 14th June 1879) that the expedition will number over 20,000 men and 36 guns, and that its object is to define the exact relations existing between the Turkomans of Tekki and the Russian Government, but that General Lazareff has strict orders not to pass a certain line unless the people of Merv commence the same kind of actions as those of Akhal, in which case Merv will be occupied. The expedition appears to have set out from Chikislar on the 18th of June.

§ Telegram from Mr. Ronald Thompson, 19th June 1879.

|| Telegram, Mr. Ronald Thomson, 10th July.

Foreign Office to India Office, No. 523, 12th July 1879.

of any kind existed between Persia and Russia as to Merv, or the advance of the Russians in that direction; would Her Majesty's Government, he added, admit Persia's claim to Merv,* in which a protest would be made by him to the Russian Minister claiming it, and protesting against Russian interference with it as tantamount to an aggression on an integral portion of Persian territory; the Shah had authorized the despatch of an agent to renew negotiations with the Merv Chiefs for their allegiance.

Lord Salisbury was disposed to authorize Mr. Thomson to inform the Persian Government that Her Majesty's Government would recognize the title of Persia to Merv on the receipt of a written assurance that they would never consent to the occupation of that place by any other Power.

A reference on the subject was made to India,† and a reply received from the Viceroy approving generally of the proposal.

At this time the Russian Minister at Teheran renewed his demand for supplies, stating that a refusal would be considered by his Government as an act of hostility. The Koochan Chief had communicated, as arranged, with Nur Verdi Khan, the principal Akhal Chief, who stated that money was not so much wanted as rifles. The Persian Government did not dare to supply these. Most of the Akhal tribe were resolved to resist stoutly by surrounding and harassing Russian detachments, &c.

MERV.—Merv‡ was a flourishing city in the ancient province of Marghiana, comprised in the empire of the Parthians. It derives its name of Merv, Mawr, from the Marucæi (a people who inhabited the country) of the ancient Greek Historio-Geographers, having lost that of Antiochia, conferred on it by Antiochus son of Seleucus Nicator, who converted the site which the Macedonian conqueror judged proper for an Alexandria into a city of considerable dimensions, surrounding it with a rampart of fifteen hundred (short) stadiæ.§

Mr. Tylour Thomson informs us, that there are, not one, but three different sites of ancient cities by the Murghab. The Natives, Burnes says, point to the ruins of Merv-i-Mukan as the city built by the Greeks, but the exact site of the original city founded by Alexander, and improved and expanded by Antiochus, has not, I believe, been ascertained. Captain Abbott believed that "several sites had, in turn, been occupied and abandoned, each retaining some vestige of its former fortifications, and these lying in a continuous line give an impression of vastness to the deserted site."—*Vide* Geographical Description.

Throughout all Western Turkestan or Turan, Merv goes by the name of Meru, Maru, or Mawr, and the country in which it is situated was styled by the Arabs Mawr-el-Nahr or Mawr-beyond the river or trans-riverine, as it is even yet called in

* There is some idea abroad that Afghanistan has some claim to Merv. She has none. She is bound not to go beyond the boundaries fixed in 1873. In years gone by, however, both Yakoub Khan and his father have been on very friendly relations with the Turkomans. (See Captain Napier's Note on Merv, 22nd February 1875.)

In the Despatch, No. 21, 2nd July 1877, the Governor of India wrote:—

"Were our relations with Afghanistan on a more satisfactory footing, the most natural and most efficient form which such action could assume would be arrangements with the Ameer authorizing him to enter into friendly relations with the Tekki Turkomans, and promising him our support in protecting them from Russian aggression if they choose to come under his rule. The Merv Tekkis have for some time past courted the Afghan alliance, guided by a firm belief in the dependence of the latter country on England, which causes them to rely much on the aid they may obtain from it."

† Telegram to Viceroy, 14th July 1879. Reply to Foreign Office, 17th July 1879.

‡ *Note*.—This account is taken from an Abstract by Mr. Michell, of the India Office, 4th March 1875. For further detailed information about Merv, see Captain Napier's Report of 22nd February 1875, in Henvey's *Précis of Events, and Government of India Letter (Secret)* of 2nd July 1877.

§ D'Anville's *Compendium of Ancient Geography*, Vol. II., p. 69.

* Meru-Road or Merv-i-Rud, is said to be a site distinct from Merv-Shahjehan.—*Vide* Geographical Description.

Bokhara. It is also called Meru-Rood,* Meru-Errund, or Merv-Shah-Jehan, "as who should say soul or affection of the Sovereign," an appellation dating, probably, from the eleventh century, when it was the favourite residence of Alp-Arslan, King of Persia.

It was within eight miles of Merv that Yezdezird II., the last sovereign of Persia of the house of Sassan, was murdered, A.D. 651, by a miller, his body being cast into a mill-stream.

Merv or Maru-Shah-Jehan was surrounded with stately palaces, groves, and gardens by Alp-Arslan (A.D. 1063—1073) of the Soljukian dynasty of Persia. The tomb of Sunjur Shah or Sultan Sunjur, Alp-Arslan's grandson, A.D. 1126—1157, who conquered all the country between the Oxus and Jaxartes, still remains at Merv, and although the few settled residents in Merv are Uzbegs, and the Turkomans are historical foes of Persia, yet the great deeds of the Persian sovereigns of the country are remembered by them and expiated on, notwithstanding also the facts that Ismael Sefi, of Persia, A.D. 1510, defeated Sheibani Khan, the powerful founder of Uzbeg dominion in Central Asia, who drove Sultan Baber from his throne, and that since the year 1787 Merv has been almost continuously independent of Persia, and has on more than one occasion successfully resisted Persian attempts to recover it.

From the period of its conquest by Shah Ismael, Merv is said to have enjoyed great prosperity, until, after beating back several Bokharian armies, it was captured by Shah Murad of Bokhara in 1857.† This Uzbeg ruler forcibly transferred the whole of the population, or, as has been stated, 40,000 families, and, in addition to this customary measure of precaution against rebellion, he destroyed the "bend" or dam of the river Murghab, in order to impoverish the country. Merv being apportioned by Shah Murad to his son Din-Nasr-Bek, was furnished by his father with an army of about 10,000 Bokharians to hold the city, held out against Mir-Haider of Bokhara (brother of Din-Nasr-Bek), but after three years warring, the Mervites succumbed,‡ Din-Nasr-Bek's army having been defeated in 1815 by a stratagem near Chardjui or Chekhardjui on the Oxus, at a place still known by the name of Kelleh-Menareh or Pyramid of Skulls, so called by a pyramid actually raised by Mir-Haider of the heads of about 5,000 Mervites, who were massacred on this occasion. Mir-Haider, in imitation of his father, again depopulated Merv, removing about 25,000 inhabitants to the centre of Bokhara, placing a garrison of 400 or 500 men in the city, when the number of inhabitants was reduced to about 500. Far from re-erecting the dam thrown down by his father, Mir-Haider allowed only a few canals to be used by the people of Merv for irrigation purposes, lest the population of Merv should again increase, and profiting by their isolated position, seek to re-establish their independence.

† Burnes' Travels into Bokhara, Vol. II., p. 37.

‡ Mirza-Shem's, "Bukhari."

Under the Bokharians Merv served, after its depopulation, as a place of banishment to which those criminals were transported who had not received sentence of death.

Merv was not long retained by Mir-Haider, for the Khivans under Mahommed-Rahim Khan took the place, and peopled it with Khorezmians or Khivans, considering it an advantageous point from which to carry on operations against Persia, and a desirable one to hold for the purpose of keeping in due subordination the lawless and disobedient Turkomans. Mir-Nasr-Ullah, of Bokhara, once more gained possession of Merv, but he did not hold it long, and the Khivans once more found themselves masters there. In order to eject them, the Bokharians incited the Turkomans to attack them, which the latter did in 1846, massacring the greater portion of the Khivans; from that time the Khan of Khiva almost every year assembled his army, and led them across the desert to Merv, but these expeditions were invariably barren of results. These military operations of Mahommed-Emin were generally confined to ravaging the country of the Turkomans, consuming their pastures, and laying waste their fields, while the Turkomans, Merv itself, or what remained of it, not being the object of attack, withdrew to a safe distance, and harassing the Khivans laughed at the Khan's fruitless excursions, which only ruined his own exchequer. In every encounter they defeated and dispersed his troops, and in the year 1850, when the Khivans, to the number of 6,000, after capturing some Turkoman horses, were about dividing the spoil, the Turkomans fell upon them unexpectedly and put nearly all of them to death.

The last expedition of Mahommed-Emin to Merv and Sarakhs, in the beginning of the year 1855, resulted in his total defeat by the Turkomans and Persians, and in the exhibition of his head as a trophy at Teheran.

Finally, in the year 1860, a Persian army, led by Hamza-Mirza, the Governor of Khorassan, occupied the enclosure now called Merv (July 19th), without any oppositions from the Téké Turkomans, but after establishing their camp lower down the Murghab river, where they laid siege to another Turkoman stronghold, the Persians were disastrously beaten, and retreated through a country inundated by the Turkomans, to Merv, and thence back again to Khorassan, losing nearly all their munitions of war, including 50 pieces of ordnance (23rd October) one of which was subsequently recovered in a Persian foray from Sarakhs.

Sir Henry Rawlinson says, in a Memorandum on the Merv and Téké Turkomans:—

“ Merv, although at present a mere ruin, and uninhabited during nine months of the year, is of much political importance, both from its strategic position and from its great actual advantages. Situated at the point where the high road from Persia to Bokhara crosses the road from Khiva to

Herat, and possessing an unlimited supply of water, it will probably take a leading place in the future history of the East. At any rate, if Merv were garrisoned by the Russian troops, and order were established in the surrounding country, the city would rapidly recover its old condition of prosperity, and would completely overawe Herat and Afghan-Turkestan."

The Tékés, Sir Henry observes, can bring 40,000 horsemen into the field.

Abbott says that "the position of Merv is so important that it never will be long abandoned, and might, with judicious care, rapidly rise from its dust into wealth and consequence."

And Shakespear was told at Merv by the more intelligent among the Asiatics, "Do you think we are such dolts as not to perceive what will be the end of all this? You and the Russians will meet and shake hands, and we shall be crushed in the operation."

Colonel Valentine Baker, Lieutenant Gill, and Major St. John bear testimony to the facility with which Merv can be approached by an army from the Attrek river.

In regard to the allegiance tendered by the Téké Turkomans of Merv to Persia, and the general value of the district to the holders of it, I must refer to page 7 and other portions of my Note of 13th August 1878.

PERSIAN ALLIANCE.—The present advance of Russia on Merv practically raises once more the important question of a Persian alliance as affording, to all appearances, the only means left to the British Government of thwarting the ambitious and ill-concealed designs of Russia in her present aggression. The Persian alliance is evidently much courted by Russia. If such an alliance be of advantage to that Power, it must obviously be to our own advantage to transfer that alliance, if practicable, to ourselves. The Shah has for years been outspoken enough on this subject, and the present moment appears, therefore, to offer a favourable opportunity for coming to an understanding with him on some distinct and consistent line of action, pointing either to a closer alliance or an abandonment of the Turkomans and eventually of Persia, to the fate that inevitably awaits them. The Shah is known to be much governed by personal influence; he is, like most Asiatic Sovereigns, wayward and treacherous, but yet has, since his accession, been consistent in his expression of his fears of Russia, and his desire for the English alliance; the governing class in Persia is corrupt and unprincipled, but the general body of the people are favourably inclined to the English, and less bigoted than Afghans or Turks. An Anglo-Persian alliance, if practicable, would no doubt exercise an enormous influence in the future of Central Asia; it would tend to open up a fresh field for British enterprise; it would save future complications between that

Power and Afghanistan; and it would cement against a common aggressor the finest material in the world for resisting any force which Russia can launch in the direction of India.

O. T. B.

India Office,
17th July 1879.

P.S. Since this Note was written a communication from the Foreign Office has been received,* containing the substance of a conversation between the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Count Schouvaloff on the 9th of July 1879. On being asked whether there was any truth in the reports of a Russian expedition against Merv, Count Schouvaloff referred to the assurance he had before given (*see* page 24 of this Note) that no such intention was entertained by the Russian Government. He had informed his Government of Lord Salisbury's intimation that Her Majesty's Government could not look without dissatisfaction upon any operation which would have the effect of either threatening Merv or encroaching upon Persian territory, and he could only repeat the assurance that no design involving either result was entertained by the Imperial Government. The present expedition would, if successful, merely have for its result the construction of a chain of posts uniting Krasnovodsk and Chikislar by a curved line of which the extreme point would not be nearer than 250 kilometres to Merv.† Count Schouvaloff added that he entirely disbelieved in the existence among any section of Russian statesmen of a wish to advance on Merv, and he remarked that, even if such a design as that of occupying Herat as a stepping stone to India were conceivable, Merv did not lie upon the nearest road between the Caspian and Herat.

O. T. B.

22nd July 1879.

* Foreign Office to India Office, No. 548,
19th July 1879.

† This point will apparently be Abiverd.

Confidential.

Copy No. 1

RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA.

(No. 3.)

In continuation of Notes on "Russia in Central Asia," Nos. 1 and 2, of 13th August 1878 and 22nd July 1879 respectively, and Note on "Persia," of 1st December 1879.

OBJECT OF NOTE.—The object of this Note is to continue the narrative of the movements of Russian troops in the Turkoman country, and on the northern frontier of Persia, since the issue of the last Departmental Memorandum on this subject.

GENERAL POSITION OF AFFAIRS UP TO 1880, INCLUSIVE.—Although these movements, and the events connected with them up to 1879, have been already recorded in detail in former Notes, the following brief recapitulation of them will no doubt be found useful in any further consideration of the question.

1842.

In 1842 the Russians, with the avowed object of assisting the Persians against the Turkomans, occupied the island of Ashurada (near Asterabad) in the Caspian Sea.

1854-55.

In 1854-55 Russia increased her naval force in the Caspian, a force which now* consists of 20 line steamers, 4 private trading steamers, and 8 war sloops, all of an average carrying capacity of 350 men. With 650 steamers and 15,000 flat-bottomed boats on the Volga, from which river vessels of deep draught can, when the wind blows from a certain quarter, enter the Caspian, the possibility of Russia being able to concentrate a large transport service in the latter sea is no longer a matter of doubt.

1869.

In 1869 the Russians established themselves at Krasnovodsk, on the east shore of the Caspian, in order to open up a commercial route to Khiva and Turkestan. Persia remonstrated against this occupation as an infringement of her territorial right to the coast line, and therefore of her independence and integrity as guaranteed by England and Russia in 1834-38, and still acknowledged† by both Powers. An understanding was, however, arrived at between Persia and Russia that the Atrek,‡ up to a distance, according to Persian interpretation, of some forty or fifty miles,§ should form the boundary between the two States, but that no Russian forts should be erected on that river.

1872.

In 1872 the Russians invaded,* for the first time, the Akhal Turkoman country, occupying Kizil-

* See Captain Napier's Report of May 1879.

† Note on Central Asia, No. 2, p. 12.

‡ See Note on Persia, p. 75.

§ See Note on Central Asia, No. 1, p. 2.

¶ Sir Henry Rawlinson says up to Chat. For description of the Rivers Gurgan and Atrek see APPENDIX A.

* See Note on Central Asia, No. 1, p. 2.

Arvat, Bami, and Beurma. This was by way of reconnaissance in support of intended operations against Khiva.

1873-74.

In 1873 the Russians established themselves at Chikislar, about ten miles to the north of the mouth of the Atrek river. Chikislar will no doubt, sooner or later, have to be abandoned, inasmuch as the water is shallow, the landing place difficult, and ships obliged to anchor some miles out from the shore.

During this year were concluded the negotiations between the English and Russian Cabinets which had been carried on since 1869,* terminating in the recognition of Afghanistan south of the Oxus as a State outside the sphere of Russian action, and in a declaration from the Czar that there was no intention on his part of extending the Russian empire further southwards. Notwithstanding this avowal, a considerable portion of Khivan territory was during the year annexed by Russia. A treaty with the Khan, concluded on 24th August 1873, followed by one with Bokhara on 28th September of the same year, placed those Khanates practically under Russian domination, and gave to Russia an exclusive right to the navigation of a great portion of the Oxus. In 1874 the Russians formed a Trans-Caspian military district, and at the same time General Lomakin, the new Governor, issued a proclamation claiming jurisdiction over the districts between the Atrek and Gurgan rivers.

* See Note on Central Asia, No. 2, pp. 1 and 2.

1875.

In consequence of these and other indications of Russian advance in Turkestan, the English Cabinet, feeling the necessity for timely precaution and the presence of a reliable Agent to watch events on the Afghan frontier, instructed† the Government of India to take measures, with as much expedition as practicable, to procure the assent of the Amir to the establishment of a British Agency at Herat. In the meantime the continued rumours of Russian designs on Merv gave rise to much comment in England, and to a fresh interchange of views between the Russian and English Cabinets.‡ In this interchange the former repeated the Czar's determination not to extend the frontiers of Russia beyond their then existing limits, and the latter intimated the concern with which England would view any aggression on Merv, as well as her determination to maintain, at all hazards, the integrity of Afghan territory. Both Governments reserved to themselves complete liberty of action as to the measures necessary to secure their respective interests and objects in Central Asia.

† Marquis of Salisbury to Government of India, 22nd January 1875.

‡ See Note on Central Asia, No. 2, pp. 1 and 13.

During the interchange of the above views§ a Russian expeditionary force of 2,000 men, under General Lomakin, started from Krasnovodsk with the Czar's direct sanction, and passing along the

§ Ditto, p. 16, and Hertslet's Summary, 16th August 1877.

old bed of the Oxus reached Kizil Arvat, and thence down to Chat, obtained the nominal submission of the Akhal Turkomans before returning to headquarters. A Russian exploring party at the same period visited* Hissar, Kolab, and Sherabad, in Bokhara.

* See Note on Central Asia, No. 2, p. 16.

1876.

On the 7th February 1876 the Khanate of Khokand, under the name of Ferghana, was added to the Russian dominions, and the English Cabinet, taking advantage of the departure of Lord Lytton to assume the viceroyalty of India, pressed upon him the necessity† for arriving at a complete understanding with Shere Ali, in view of promising him aid against external attack, provided he, on his part, consented to the establishment of British Agents in those parts of his dominions whence they might best watch the course of events beyond the frontier.

† Instructions to Lord Lytton, 28th February 1876. Afghan Blue Book, No. 1 of 1878, pp. 156 to 159.

1877.

In 1877‡ a Russian expeditionary force of about 3,000 men under General Lomakin again left Krasnovodsk for Kizil Arvat, but partly on account of unexpected difficulties, and partly from the sudden outbreak of war between Russia and Turkey it was hastily recalled.

‡ See Note on Central Asia, No. 2, p. 17.

This expedition gave rise to fresh rumours of Russian designs on Merv, and to further representations being made on the subject to the Russian Government§ by Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg. Captain Napier of the Indian Army was at the same time specially deputed to visit the northern frontier of Persia, to watch and report upon the course of events in that quarter.

§ Ditto, p. 17.

1878.

In 1878 the relations between England and Russia became extremely strained. As a collision between the two powers seemed not improbable, a vote was passed in the English House of Commons (7th February) for a grant of six millions sterling for extra war expenditure, and the British fleet a few days afterwards (13th February) entered the Dardanelles, to watch events at Constantinople. Warlike preparations in Central Asia were at the same time pushed forward with great vigour by Russia.

|| Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, 12th April and 3rd July 1878.

On the 12th|| of March General Tchernaiëff was deputed by the Czar on a special mission of great importance to the "tribes of the Indian frontier." He was accompanied by General Stolietoff. On the 28th of March the English reserves were called out, and on the 17th of April a division of Native troops was brought by the English Government from India to Malta.

These warlike preparations on the part of both powers having proceeded thus far, a change soon became apparent, and at the end of April peace prospects improved. General Tchernaiëff was suddenly recalled, on account¶ of "some change in

¶ Lord A. Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, 15th May 1878.

"the operations against British India," and on the 6th of May it was announced in the English Parliament that active peace negotiations were going on between England and Russia.

Notwithstanding these improved prospects,* however, a precautionary General Order was issued on the 14th of May by General Kauffmann (who, it must be remembered, was in direct telegraphic communication with St. Petersburg), directing, under instructions received from the Minister of War, the formation of three operating columns in Turkistan.

The first, or Samarkand column, under Major-General Trotski, was to consist of 12,000 men. The second, or Ferghana column, under Major-General Abramof, of 1,700 men; and the third, or Oxus column, under Colonel Grotenhelm of a similar number. The fourth, or Akhal column, was to consist of 4,000 men. "Judging by the General Order," wrote the "Novoye Vremia," "the force now in the field numbers 20,000 men, or thereabouts, who are assembled at Djam, Charjoi, and the valley of the Kizil-Su."† The destination of these columns was unknown, but was reported by the Russian press to be the "Indian frontier."

Meanwhile, on the 13th June, the International Peace Congress, in which Russia joined, commenced its sittings at Berlin. On the same day General Stolielloff (who was, it must again be said, in telegraphic communication with St. Petersburg) left Samarkand, accompanied by a large escort, bearing a letter‡ to the Amir Shere Ali, and armed with powers to conclude an offensive and defensive treaty with him. The Peace Congress at Berlin came to a favourable conclusion on the 14th of July, but unfortunately General Stolielloff's mission to Kabul was not countermanded, and on the 22nd idem he entered Kabul in state, meeting with a friendly reception from the Afghans.

On representations being addressed to the Russian Government on the subject of the Russian war preparations§ in Turkistan and General Stolielloff's mission to Kabul, M. de Giers denied at first all knowledge of these movements, but at length admitted their existence, and subsequently, in August, gave an assurance that "all Russian military preparations|| in Central Asia had been suspended." In accordance apparently with these orders, General Stolielloff withdrew from Kabul, with a portion of his escort, early in September. But the action of the Amir in refusing to receive a British mission gave rise unhappily to war between him and the British Government. Afghanistan was on the 21st November 1878, invaded by the Indian forces, and on the 13th of December Shere Ali, accompanied by the remainder of the Russian mission, seeing resistance to be hopeless, fled from Kabul, and eventually died on 21st February 1879 in Afghan Turkistan.

On the 19th of December 1878, after some preliminary conversations between Count Schouvaloff and the Marquis of Salisbury as to Central Asia

* Note on Central Asia, No. 1, p. 32.

† Grotenhelm in reality never reached Charjoi, nor did Abramof's column cross the mountains from Ferghana to the Kizil-Su.

‡ Note on Russian Correspondence, p. 23.

§ See Note on Central Asia, No. 1, p. 42, onwards.

|| Telegram from St. Petersburg, 14th August 1878.

* Foreign Office to India Office, 20th December 1878.

NOTE.—Instructions were sent on the same day by the Russian Government for the withdrawal of the mission. But meanwhile, as stated above, it had left Kabul, with Shere Ali, on the 13th idem, and at the time of this interchange of views the correspondence as to the draft treaty, since discovered at Kabul, was not known to the English Government. As this matter is explained at greater length in a separate Departmental Note on Afghanistan, it is not necessary to say anything more on the subject here.

and the status of Afghanistan, demi-official notes on the subjects were exchanged* between the two ministers. The former asked on behalf of Prince Gortchakof "whether the arrangements between Russia and England, such as they existed before the despatch of the mission, and such as they are recorded in the correspondence on the subject between the two Cabinets" were maintained by Her Majesty's Government, and if they retained in their eyes "their obligatory character," and added, "His Majesty the Emperor is disposed, on his part, to observe all the arrangements relative to Central Asia concluded between Russia and England, and to recall immediately the mission which is at Kabul." To this Lord Salisbury replied that the continued presence of the Russian mission at Kabul was the sole obstacle to a full revival of the understanding between the two Powers expressed in the correspondence which had passed between them upon the subject of Afghanistan and Central Asia, and that when the Russian mission was withdrawn Her Majesty's Government would consider that "all engagements on both sides with respect to these countries retain their obligatory character."

1879.

The year 1879 was marked by renewed activity on the part of Russia in the Trans-Caspian district.

The Russian forces in this district had been already augmented to 20,000 men. Strong forts were erected at Chikislar and Chat, and a telegraph line laid across the Caspian (150 miles) from Baku to Krasnovodsk, thence to Asterabad and Chat *via* Chikislar. At the same time Major-General Lomakin was withdrawn from command of the district and superseded by Adjutant-General Lazareff,† an Armenian, reputed to be one of the best and bravest officers of the army of the Caucasus. This officer reached Chikislar on the 21st of March, but after making a preliminary reconnaissance as far as Chat he left his new post for Tiflis, to settle with the military authorities of the Caucasus measures for the despatch of troops and stores from the ports of Baku, Petrowsk, and Astrakan.

He eventually returned to Chikislar‡ in June, accompanied by Major-General Count Borch, the commander of the infantry, Major-General Prince Ferdinand Wittgenstein, the commander of the cavalry, Colonel Malam, the chief of the Staff, and Colonel Prince Dolgorouki, Aide-de-Camp to the Emperor, and the designated chief of the advanced guard. Early in July, Major-General Lomakin himself joined the staff of General Lazareff, and later on proceeded with it up the Atrek.

The only foreigner allowed to accompany the expedition was Colonel Zulfikar Khan, Military Agent representing the Shah of Persia.

† See Note on Central Asia, No. 2, pp. 6, 7, for account of General Lazareff's appointment and the preparations which followed it.

‡ Marvin's History of the Akhal Campaign, p. 99.

It was early rumoured in the Russian and English press that General Lazareff's force would consist of 30,000 troops, with a large baggage train. Lord Dufferin* reported, however, from St. Petersburg that it would amount to about 14,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry, a company of sappers, and 24 guns. Mr. O'Donovan, of the "Daily News," calculated the numbers at,—

	Men.
16½ battalions of infantry, each 800 men	13,200
23 sotnias of Cossacks and dragoons, and 5 sotnias of Turkomans, each about 140 men	3,000
32 9-pdr. guns and 4 Cossack guns, 36 guns in all, with	2,000
	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/> 18,200

The object of the expedition was said to be to "define the exact relations existing between the Turkomans of Téké and the Russian Government." General Lazareff informed Mr. O'Donovan that he had the strictest orders not to depass a certain line, unless the people of Merv commenced the same kind of action as those of the Akhal, in which case "Merv will be occupied."

The extensive preparations thus made gave rise to renewed rumours of the intention of the Russian troops to move on Merv. These rumours, and the alarm† they caused to the Persian Government, who unhesitatingly claimed Merv as Persian territory, caused the English Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Marquis of Salisbury) to inform Count Schouvaloff that "Her Majesty's Government would take exception to any operations by which Merv was menaced, and would object to any encroachments upon Persian territory."‡ In reply to this intimation an assurance was received from the Russian Ambassador that there was no chance of either contingency, and that the furthest§ point contemplated by the new expedition was at least 150 miles from Merv.

In a conversation which Lord Dufferin had on the 9th of July 1879 with M. de Giers,|| the latter assured him that there was no intention on the part of the Russian Government to go to Merv, and that in the conduct of the operations the strictest orders had been given to respect Persian territory.

In a conversation on the same subject with Baron Jomini, the latter assured Her Majesty's Ambassador that the Russian advance was intended to stop at a point (supposed to be Abiverd) 150 miles upon this side of Merv. "But," added the Baron, "although we do not intend to go to Merv, or to do anything which may be interpreted as a menace to England, you must not deceive yourself, for the result of our present proceedings will be to furnish us with a base of operations against England hereafter, should the British Government by the occupation of Herat threaten our position in Central Asia."

* Earl of Dufferin, No. 347, of 26th May 1879. Mr. O'Donovan, 24th May 1879. Mr. R. Thomson, No. 137, of 14th June, and No. 208, of 29th August 1879.

NOTE.—This estimate appears to be a fairly correct one, inasmuch as a year afterwards an Armenian merchant, who was an intimate friend of General Lazareff, stated that the Russian forces amounted to 20,000 men, of whom no less than one half perished in the plains east of Chikislar from disease engendered by bad food and water. (Mr. R. Thomson, No. 114, of 17th May 1880.)

NOTE.—The opinion of the Russian press on this subject will be found in APPENDIX B.

† See Central Asia Note, No. 1, p. 24.

‡ See Central Asia Note, No. 1, pp. 24 and 30.

§ Foreign Office to India Office, 22nd May and 29th July 1879.

¶ Vide APPENDIX C for the general views of Her Majesty's Minister at Teheran and the late Sir Louis Cavagnari on this question. They are interesting as coming from such sources.

|| Lord Dufferin, No. 321, 15th July 1879. Foreign Office, 25th July 1879.

* Lord Dufferin, No. 362, of 30th July 1879.
Foreign Office, 8th August 1879.

In a subsequent conversation (30th July*) on the same subject, M. de Giers informed Lord Dufferin that the Czar had expressly approved the assurances he had given to the English Ambassador as to the non-advance of the Russian troops on Merv. In reply, Lord Dufferin reminded M. de Giers of Baron Jomini's remarks, and, at the same time, informed Her Majesty's Government that taking it for granted that the present expedition under General Lazareff had no other objective points than those indicated by the Russian Government, the language held by Baron Jomini left little doubt as to the "nature of the positions which the Russians " are seeking to prepare for themselves to the east-ward of the Caspian."

Some days afterwards (12th August) the Czar himself assured Her Majesty's Ambassador that there was no intention of the Russian troops advancing on Merv.

† Lord Dufferin, 26th August 1879.
Foreign Office, 9th September 1879.

In another conversation with M. de Giers Lord Dufferin† was informed by him, in reference to recent language about Merv, that although the occupation of that place formed no part of the existing programme of the Russian Government, he did not mean to imply by his former remarks that under different circumstances, and in view of unforeseen contingencies, the occupation of Merv might not become necessary. This qualification of former assurances invested the language of the Russian Minister, in Lord Dufferin's opinion, "with considerable ambiguity."

At this period a great desire was expressed on the part of Russia, who saw the mistake which had been made on her part in vitiating her share of the agreements of 1873-75 as to Afghanistan, to arrive at some new and equitable understanding with England for "settling the "Central Asian question."

‡ Foreign Office, 689, 11th September 1879.

In August 1879 the "Journal de St. Petersburg" of August 28th and 29th published a lengthy review of the engagements taken by England and Russia respectively with regard to Central Asia.‡ In this article it was said that the English Cabinet having formally declared that it had no intention§ of interfering with the independence of Afghanistan, and the Government of Russia having on its part recalled its mission to Kabul, the *status quo ante* was re-established. The "Agence Russe," on the 28th August, also published an article on the same question, saying that England had broken the reciprocal engagements|| entered into between Russia and herself in 1869 and 1875.

§ "N'entendent pas porter atteinte à "l'indépendance d'Afghanistan" (i.e., that "they did not mean to violate").

|| "Venait de rompre."

¶ Foreign Office, 765, dated 5th October 1879.

On 24th September Mr. Plunkett reported¶ that he never saw Baron Jomini without his expressing in some form or other the hope that advantage would be taken of present complications in Asia for the conclusion of some permanent arrangement between Great Britain and Russia which would once and for all put an end to the bickerings and jealousies of the two Governments.

Although Baron Jomini acknowledged that nothing could be expected until the murder of the British Mission at Kabul had been completely avenged, he expressed his earnest hope that an equitable arrangement should then be concerted between the two Governments for settling the Central Asian question. Mr. Plunkett reminded Lord Salisbury that the Russians interpreted the agreement of 1875, revived in 1878, with Count Schouvaloff in a sense somewhat different from that given to it by Her Majesty's Government.

On the 30th September Count Schouvaloff called on Lord Salisbury,* and put forward a proposal which he said was entirely his own, viz., "that Russia " should give to England a formal promise not to " interfere in Afghanistan, or attempt in any way " to exercise influence there, on the understanding " that England, while reserving her right to send " Envoys into that country, would undertake not " to exercise that right so long as Russia kept this " promise." Lord Salisbury gave no encouragement to the suggestion.

Whatever may have been the fears of the English and Persian Governments at this period as to further Russian aggression in the Turkoman country, it soon became evident that the great delay made in the Russian preparations, added in some measure to the action of the Persian Government in withholding supplies† from it under the influence of Her Majesty's Minister at Teheran, would cause the operations thus undertaken in the heat of summer to end in partial, if not entire, failure. Moreover, the force itself, judging by reports received from various quarters, was not in a high state of discipline.

According to Mr. Lyall‡ :—

"The peculation and embezzlement which occurred during General Lazareff's command are said to have been unprecedented, and the great mortality and sickness which prevailed to be in great part a consequence of it. The chief of the medical staff was compelled by threats to pass meat and provisions not fit for consumption supplied by the head contractor, one of the most influential Armenians of Tiflis, and a connection of the late General. General Tergukasoff, on taking over the command after Lazareff's death, found on arrival at headquarters some 40 or 50 officers of various grades belonging to high families and show regiments stationed at St. Petersburg and Moscow, who had, with a view to receiving orders and decorations got themselves appointed to the staff. As these gentlemen did nothing but drink and impair the efficiency of the force by idleness, extravagance, and luxury, they were forthwith ordered to return to their regiments. Most of them belonged to influential families, and as, in consequence of the disastrous result of the expedition to which they had contributed they received no decorations, their friends are supposed to have had something to do

This matter will be more fully dealt with in the separate Note on Afghanistan.

* Foreign Office, 776, dated 9th October 1879.

Lord Salisbury to Mr. Plunkett, 4th October 1879.

† See APPENDIX D.

‡ Consul Lyall, 25th January 1880, to Marquis of Salisbury.
Foreign Office, 23rd February 1880.

NOTE.—Mr. Consul Lyall's account of the civil government of the Russians at Tiflis is not much better. He says :—"The usual discontent and dissatisfaction with the Government which prevails here is increasing and extending to the official classes, and to the military. It is universally and openly asserted that no official can live without resorting to gross peculation, indeed, the few not doing so are commonly looked upon as miserably weak and inevitably destined to failure and ruin. The whole *personnel* of the Government is, in fact, everywhere, both privately and publicly, hopelessly corrupt and vicious; at least such is the opinion, not only of the foreign Consuls here and foreign Residents of long standing, but of the official classes themselves individually, as I have often had occasion to remark. Merit, honesty, and efficiency in a public official, civil or military, is here actually a bar to his advancement."

NOTE.—These officers abound in Caucasian campaigns, and are commonly nicknamed "Fasans" or "Pheasants." They carry an enormous quantity of baggage, regard with contempt the regimental officer, and when a battle takes place take up a good position in rear, so as to enjoy a view of the fighting without risk of a bullet. (Correspondent of "Golos," Marvin, p. 167.)

with General Tergukasoff's subsequent resignation." (See page 11.)

* Sir H. Layard to the Marquis of Salisbury,
7th April 1880.
Foreign Office, 4th May 1880.

Mr. Perkins, an English mining engineer, who subsequently visited Krasnovodsk, also reported:—*

"The corruption amongst the Russian officials is astounding. Hundreds of camels returned as dead or captured by the enemy are merely shipped over to Baku to be repurchased for the benefit of those in high command. The friendly Turkomans are suffering terribly at the hands of their so-called protectors. Occasionally an expedition is organized for the purpose of attacking the desert people; but, instead of operating in that direction, the villages of the friendly Turkomans are surrounded, black mail levied, and the women carried off for the pleasure of the officers, being allowed to return after a few months' detention. A batch of soldiers returning by a steamer which arrived at Baku during Mr. Perkins' stay at that place sold to the Armenians in the bazaars two tons weight of silver ornaments and coins taken from the Turkoman women."

Turning from this digression to the movements of General Lazareff's column, we are informed that, although the advanced guard under Prince Dolgorouki left Chikislar on the 18th of June (1879), the march of the main column, notwithstanding every effort on the part of General Lazareff, was delayed till the 11th of August. On that date, the infantry under Count Borch set out from Chikislar, followed, on the 12th and 14th idem, by the cavalry under Prince Wittgenstein and the general staff. General Lazareff, was overborne with work and anxiety; he was ill with a carbuncle, and with difficulty followed the column on the 24th idem. But he had no sooner reached Chat some hours afterwards than, to the inexpressible grief of the force, he suddenly expired. Upon this, General Lomakin assumed command of the expedition.

After some successful encounters with Turkomans, General Lomakin moved on to Khoja Kala, where, on the 31st of August, he held a council of war, which unhesitatingly decided on an advance with a light column across the Kopet Dagh on Geuk Tepé, where the main body of the Turkomans were assembled. The composition of the force which was then to move onwards was,—

6 battalions of infantry,
6 sotnias and squadrons of cavalry.
8 rocket tubes,
12 guns,

making a total, according to General Lomakin's own report, of 3,790 men.

The troops were divided into two columns, the advanced guard under Prince Dolgorouki and the main body under Count Borch. They reached Bami on the 3rd of September; Beurma, nine miles beyond, on the 4th; and, finally, on the 9th idem, advanced on Geuk Tepé. Here the Turkomans, under the leadership of Berdi Murad, son of Nur Verdi Khan, the chief of Merv, were

NOTE.—The death of Lazareff is touchingly related in Marvin's Russian Campaign, p. 130. His body was conveyed to Tiflis, and there buried in the Armenian burying ground.

NOTE.—Reports from the Persian officers attached to the expedition and from other sources make the total to be 10,000 men. But the number here given is more probable.

assembled in great force, strongly intrenched inside a fortified position called Dengil Tepé.

The Russian columns, furnished with provisions for two days, moved out from their camping ground (about nine miles from Geuk Tepé) at about 2 a.m. on the morning of the 9th. Masses of Turkoman cavalry harassed the columns as they approached the position. General Lomakin, as they arrived at the fortress, made no effort to treat with the enemy, but proceeded at once to bombard the place, whilst cutting off all escape from it with his cavalry. According to his official report, the cannonade was kept up for six hours, entailing enormous losses on the Tékés, men, women, and children.*

Up to this point the advantage lay with the Russians. Some of the Téké outworks had been carried with success, and there appeared to be every prospect of the tribe surrendering at discretion sooner or later, had General Lomakin been content at this favourable juncture to cut off their retreat at Askabad and remain in his position for the night; but in a fatal moment he decided on a final assault at 5 p.m., notwithstanding darkness was approaching and his troops very tired. Discarding the advantages offered by artillery, rockets, and long-range breechloaders, he advanced 1,400 infantry in a thin line, without reserves, over ground broken by ditches, pitfalls, pools of water, and walls of clay, forcing them (across a moat and a rampart) against thousands of desperate men goaded to madness by the sight of the massacre of their women and children without chance of escape. The consequences were what might have been expected. The valour of the Russian troops went for naught. The attack entirely failed. The Tékés, seeing this failure of the attack, rushed upon the Russian soldiers "like wild beasts," and, headed by their chief, Berdi Murad Khan (who fell leading his men) pursued them into their camp, where every man of the force must have perished, had not a well directed artillery fire arrested the attack and night put an end to further operations.

The Russian camp was said to be in complete chaos; the troops were demoralized; the losses of the force had amounted to 27 officers and 426 men;† and the generals had all "lost their heads." At midnight, therefore, a council of war decided upon an immediate retreat on Band-i-Hassan. The Téké losses were far heavier than those of the Russians, so much so that it was subsequently ascertained that they intended to submit next morning, had not they seen, to their intense surprise, the Russian troops rapidly marching off. General Lomakin's force reached Band-i-Hassan on the 19th September, and there heard, to the great satisfaction of the troops, of the appointment of General Tergukasoff as Commander-in-Chief, in place of the late General Lazareff. On the arrival of the force at Chat on the 29th idem they met the new General. By the 20th of October‡ the entire expedition had arrived at Chikislar, accompanied by General Tergukasoff,

NOTE.—This quadrangular fortress of Dengil Tepé occupied with its *enceinte* an area of a mile. At a distance of a mile and a half from the fort to the south is the Kopet Dagh, and to the east, Geuk Tepé. The two other sides of the adl face the open plain. The fortress is protected by a ditch twelve feet deep, having steep sides and a clay parapet. Behind this parapet are several rows of "kibitkas" or mud huts. At their rear again is a second ditch and a second parapet. Then comes the interior of the fortress, capable of holding many thousand men, with their women and children.

* General Lomakin's telegram from Beurma, 15th September. Zulfikar Khan's account. Mr. R. Thomson, No. 260, of 1st November 1879. Mr. Marvin's Russian expedition. Mr. O'Donovan's Report. Consul Churchill to Marquis of Salisbury, No. 13, of 15th November 1879.

† Russian official account published in the Tifis "Kavkaz," 5th November 1879.

‡ "Moscow Gazette." Mr. Plunkett, No. 29, 14th November 1879. Foreign Office, 10th December 1879.

who was struck with dismay at the result of the expedition and the condition of the force, thinned by disease and demoralized by failure. General Lomakin betook himself to Krasnovodsk, followed, it is said, by neither the regrets nor the good wishes of the soldiers. Prince Dolgorouki left for Berlin as Military Attaché, and Prince Wittgenstein and Count Borch retired to Tiflis. The complete disorganization of the Russian transport, and the difficulty of restoring that service at so advanced a season of the year, put an end to all further operations, and thus ended a campaign which had cost ten million roubles (1,000,000*l.*) and had occupied the energies of 20,000 men for six months.

The Russian Government, although much depressed by their past failure to gain a footing in the Akhal country, by no means gave up further efforts to do so. The success of English arms in Afghanistan made their own failure all the more galling, and, as was to be expected, redoubled their resolution to avenge the disaster at Dengil Tepé and carry out their long cherished plans.

Although only 2,000 men were left at Chikislar, and the whole of the demoralized regiments were re-embarked for their own country, no time was lost in organizing a new expedition for the following year, which was to be entrusted to no less* a personage than General Scobelev,† in succession of General Tergukasoff. And on the 21st of December 1879 M. de Giers frankly informed Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg that preparations were on foot for a large expedition against the Téké Turkomans for the spring of 1880, directed from Chikislar and Samarkand. It might become necessary, he said, to "destroy Merv, although there " could be no intention that any Russian troops " should remain there."

1880.

The most important feature of Central Asian politics in the early part of this year was the continued anxiety of the Russian Government to come to some friendly understanding with England on affairs in that direction.

In a conversation between Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg and Prince Gortchakof, on the 13th January,‡ the latter asked Lord Dufferin to do everything he could to promote a good understanding between Russia and England in respect of affairs in Central Asia which he thought might be accommodated to the satisfaction of both countries without injury to the dignity or interests of either.

Lord Dufferin also reported§ that in a recent conversation with M. de Giers the latter said that it would be premature to moot the subject officially, but that, in his private opinion, he thought an understanding with England might readily be arrived at. Russia, upon her part, would be most willing to reach an amicable settlement in regard to all matters which might have a tendency to pre-

* Consul Lyall, Tiflis, to Marquis of Salisbury, 3rd February 1880.

Lord Dufferin to Marquis of Salisbury, 31st December 1879.

Foreign Office, 16th January 1880 and 2nd February 1880.

† This is the spelling of his name adopted by General Scobelev himself on a photograph given by him to Sir Henry Rawlinson.

‡ Foreign Office, 99, 7th February 1880.
Lord Dufferin to the Marquis of Salisbury, 14th January 1880.

§ Lord Dufferin to Marquis of Salisbury, 29th January 1880.

occupy the two powers either now or hereafter. M. de Giers intimated to his colleague that he was very much disturbed by the reported intention of the British Government to occupy Kandahar, as Kandahar commanded Herat, &c.

During the following month Lord Dufferin had several conversations with the Russian Minister on the subject of Herat :* he also reported that General Chanzy (the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg) was strongly impressed with the conviction that the Russian Government was most anxious to arrive at an amicable settlement with England in regard to Central Asian affairs, and that if this could be soon arrived at the Central Asian expeditionary force would not be allowed to reach Merv.

On 16th March 1880, † Lord Dufferin reported that the Italian Ambassador referred to the manifest desire of the Russian Government to come to a friendly understanding with England in respect to Central Asia. He did this no doubt at the request of M. de Giers. Lord Dufferin expressed himself gratified to learn that the Emperor and his advisers were in so conciliatory a frame of mind ; that all we desired in India was to be let alone, and that if the Russian Government really wished to convince us of their friendly feelings they should put a stop to the innumerable indications which had been recently cropping up of their desire to ascertain by what means and to what extent it might be possible for them to ruffle the tranquillity of our Indian possessions. Lord Dufferin expressed his own opinion to Lord Salisbury that regard being had to the result of the various negotiations of past years with Russia, it would " be manifestly futile to base " the safety of the North-west Frontier of India " upon any understanding, stipulation, convention, " or treaty, with the Imperial Government." If, however, after having erected the best material barrier circumstances might admit against the risk of future annoyance, it should be thought desirable to reinforce our position by any collateral security in the shape of a formal agreement with Russia, he did not think the present a bad opportunity.

The English Cabinet, so far as is known in this Department, took no action in the direction of concluding a formal agreement as to British and Russian political relations in Central Asia.

And, indeed, the continued verbal assurances of the Russian Ministers as to their non-aggressive intentions in the Trans-Caspian district, and their desire to arrive at a peaceful settlement on Central Asian affairs, did not now, as they did not at any previous period, agree with their action in the Turkoman country. Nor, indeed, could Russia be expected to bear the Dengil Tepé defeat without a further effort to crush the Akhal Turkomans and to recover her lost prestige. Great preparations were, therefore, made, as aforesaid, for a new expedition.

Krasnovodsk, in place of Chikislar, was to be the base of operations this year for the new Akhal expedition. These operations were to depend some-

* Foreign Office, 154, 27th February 1880.
Lord Dufferin to Marquis of Salisbury,
11th February 1880.

† Foreign Office, 293, 23rd April 1880.
Lord Dufferin to Lord Salisbury, 16th
March 1880.

* Earl of Dufferin to Earl Granville, 2nd April and 6th May 1880.
Foreign Office, 24th and 25th May 1880.

† Earl of Dufferin, 11th February 1880.
Foreign Office, 27th February 1880.
Mr. R. Thomson, No. 208, of 11th September 1880.

‡ Earl of Dufferin, 13th April 1880.
Foreign Office, 25th May 1880.

§ Mr. Thomson, telegram, 17th March 1880.
Foreign Office, 18th March 1880.

NOTE.—This opinion is not unreasonable. The Russians have carefully surveyed the Oxus (see APPENDIX E) in that direction, and it is affirmed by some good authorities that their original intention in loosing Abdul Rahman was to secure, through him, a hold on Afghan Turkestan and Maimena. For a remarkable series of questions submitted by the Austrian officers at Teheran to their Government as to Russian operations towards Maimena, see, in this Appendix, certain extracts from the "Standard" newspaper.

|| Mr. Plunkett reports (18th November 1880; Foreign Office, 14th December) from St. Petersburg that a credit of 700,000*l.* has been opened for this railway.

¶ Earl of Dufferin, 25th January 1880.
Consul Lyall, 3rd March 1880.
Foreign Office, 13th April 1880.

** For table of approximate distances of certain places in Central Asia and Afghanistan, see NOTE to APPENDICES.

†† Mr. Plunkett, 29th October 1880.
Foreign Office, 11th November 1880.

‡‡ Mr. Lyall reports (14th November 1880; Foreign Office, 15th December) that this line is stopped for want of funds.

§§ Foreign Office, 15th November 1880.

||| See APPENDIX E.

what upon the report submitted on the subject by General Scobelev.* A small column was placed at his disposal for immediate reconnaissance purposes, and a large reserve collected for ultimate use. The numbers of the entire force have been variously estimated. Lord Dufferin,† on the authority of General Chanzy, put it at 25,000 men; Mr. R. Thomson, on the authority of the Persian Government, at about 10,000 men, and 48 guns. General Scobelev himself left St. Petersburg for Tiflis on the 11th of April.‡ Silence as to the objects and progress of his mission was imposed on all the Russian newspapers.

The Turkoman chiefs were fully alive to possible future events; they advanced from Geuk Tepé, harassed the Russian detachments at Dur Verdas and elsewhere, north-east of Chikislar, and lost no time in strengthening themselves on the Akhal line.§ They themselves considered "a Russian advance by way of Charjoi to be impracticable," and expressed to others the opinion that "any Russian expedition against Merv must approach either by Akhal or from the Oxus, by Sherabad and Maimena territory."

The Russian Government decided at once to construct a line of railway|| from Krasnovodsk to Kizil Arvat,¶ a distance of about 160 miles, at a cost of about 780,000*l.*, the whole line to be finished within two years. Owing to delay in forwarding rails and other material, the line was not begun till about the end of August, directed from Michaeloff Bay, instead of from Krasnovodsk, along the old bed of the Oxus. There is water communication between Krasnovodsk and Michaeloff. Up to October 1880, the line had been completed to a point called Kiskison, a few miles beyond Molla Kari (or about 20 miles), notwithstanding unexpected difficulties encountered in laying a line of rails over mounds of friable sand. From this point on to the depôt at Bami is about 185 miles,** for a part of which distance a "mobile tramway" is stated to be in course of construction. The continuation of the line has been placed under the supervision of Lieutenant-General Annenkoff,†† and it is thought that the remaining portion of the railroad will not present such difficulties in its construction as those encountered in the completed section.

Whilst this railroad is being made into the Akhal country, a short line of railway has been commenced from‡‡ Baku to Tiflis (300 miles), of which 15 miles have been finished. From Tiflis there is a line of rail to Poti, on the Black Sea. Surveys for a railway from Sarakoff, through Emba, Kungrad, and Petro Alexandrovsk (in Khiva, on the Oxus) to Tashkend and Samarkand, are being completed, and telegraph lines§§ to join Krasnovodsk with Asterabad and Bami are at the same time being rapidly constructed. An expedition||| to ascertain the navigability of the Oxus was also successfully carried out during 1879.

Viewing all these preparations as indicative of future important movements, the English Government* decided to employ some officer in the place of Captain Napier, who had left Persia, to obtain accurate information of them. After unavoidable delay in this matter, Major Lovett, R.E., was gazetted as Consul at Asterabad in the autumn of 1880, whence it is thought he will be in a position, on arrival, to furnish Her Majesty's Government with all the information they require on the subject.

The Persian Government, during the early part of 1880, endeavoured to open up new negotiations with the Merv Turkomans.† These negotiations ended in failure, principally, it is said, because the Turkomans wished to be allowed to occupy the country around Sarakhs and Tejjen, and the Shah, viewing their presence in Khorassan as dangerous, was not disposed to grant this concession. The Persian Government watched the new Russian operations with much anxiety. This was natural for the following reasons. The Persian Ministers have always affirmed that the Russian objective is Merv. Beyond the extreme eastern limit of the Akhal Tékes at Gavers (30 miles from Abiverd) commences the Deregez Attok, which is a district of great importance in itself, and of still greater importance in connection with any Russian advance on Merv from the Akhal direction. It is a Persian district, 40 miles long and 30 miles broad, well watered, fertile, and populous. No army could pass from the Akhal Turkoman country to Merv without traversing Deregez, inasmuch as the desert comes up close to the foot of the hills bounding it on the north. It is, moreover, the natural base for any serious operations against Merv; but it is Persian. Hence a natural anxiety in the minds of the Persian Ministers that, should any Russian expedition reach this point, the question would assume an awkward phase as to their own opposition or consent to a further Russian advance. But assuming this difficulty surmounted, the Russians could hardly approach Merv except by detouring through Sarakhs; a complication still more serious, as it might in this case involve the resuscitation, as between England and Russia, of the difficult question of the integrity of Persia, and the future status of that country. In the light of these possible eventualities, it is not difficult to understand the anxiety which Her Majesty's Government felt during 1879 on the subject, and the encouragement given by them to the Shah to withhold any direct aid to the Russian Akhal expedition. With the cordial co-operation of Persia, the occupation of Merv by Russian troops from the Caspian (700 miles) by way of the Akhal Attok and Sarakhs, supported by an auxiliary column from the Oxus, would be comparatively easy. But if Persia were to take her stand, to refuse supplies, and decline to give her adhesion to any movement calculated to

* Foreign Office, 22nd April 1880.
Reply of India Office, 18th May 1880.

† Mr. R. Thomson, No. 90, of 17th April 1880.

NOTE.—These facts are taken from Sir H. Rawlinson's valuable lecture on the road to Merv. See Royal Geographical Society Proceedings for March 1879.

NOTE.—From information which has been recently received it is not certain whether a column could not pass direct from Akhal to Merv, but as Persia claims Merv the complication here glanced at would still occur, whether the Russians occupied Deregez or not. For further important details as to Persia's desire to have her right to Merv recognized, her own desire to be considered a neutral country, and her reported communications with the Austrian Government, see APPENDIX F; also Note on Persia in regard to her neutralization, of 1st December 1879, p. 92.

NOTE.—As to this question of supplies, see APPENDIX D.

infringe her territorial rights, the march from the Caspian to Abiverd would be difficult, and that from Akhal to Merv well nigh impossible.

* Mr. R. Thomson, No. 176, of 5th August 1880.

The anxiety of the Persian Government on the subject was shown by the Persian Foreign Minister* reiterating to the Russian Minister at Teheran that, as Merv was claimed as Persian territory, "any attempt on the part of Russia to occupy it in disregard of recent assurances would be viewed as an infringement of the Shah's sovereign rights."

† Mr. Thomson, No. 232, of 25th September 1870.

Russian Minister's Letter, 20th September 1879.

In reply to general remonstrances addressed to him on the subject of infringement of Persian rights on her northern frontier, the Russian Minister† at Teheran intimated that the Persian Government had on more than one occasion "expressed their approbation of the Akhal expedition," (Mr. Thomson rather confirmed this idea), but that he was authorized to convey the assurance that "the sovereign and territorial rights of Persia would be respected."

‡ Mr. R. Thomson, No. 114, of 17th May, and No. 140, of 11th June 1880.

Reverting again to Russian and Turkoman movements early in 1880, as described at p. 13, it is to be noted that‡ Nur Verdi Khan, the new Merv Chief, constructed strong fortifications at Merv, and professed a great desire to be considered a British subject! These manifestations of loyalty, of course, bore no fruit, and all chance of his being "naturalized" was taken away by his death on the 12th of May, and the succession of his son, Makdum Kuli Khan, to the chiefship. Nur Verdi Khan had, during a long and chequered career, shown himself to be both a statesman and a generalship, and his death was a blow which the Turkomans will perhaps never recover.

§ Earl of Dufferin, 8th July. Article "Invalide Russe," of 7th July 1880.

Meanwhile the Russian Commander was not idle. His troops had been carefully concentrated in the Trans-Caspian stations.§ He himself reached Krasnovodsk about the middle of May, and on the 9th of June advanced from Chikislar by way of Chat and Khoja Kala to Bami with a light column of about 3,000 men and 18 guns. Thence he made, on the 13th of July, a reconnaissance lasting nine days, with about 1,000 men and all his guns, in the direction of Geuk Tepé. He also issued a proclamation, of which the following is a copy:—||

|| Mr. R. Thomson, No. 212, 18th of September 1880.

"By the will of the White Czar, I have been appointed to the command of the troops despatched to this country, and have been directed to watch over its inhabitants.

"The desire of the White Czar is that your people should also live in peace and tranquillity like the millions of other Mahomedan subjects residing in these countries. Therefore, in accordance with this order, you must seek your livelihood by means of trade and industry, and give up all plundering and pillaging habits, for all robbers and highwaymen will speedily be exterminated. Such persons as disobey the commands of the White Czar will also be severely reprimanded and punished.

" Being the agent of the merciful Czar, I have to notify to all your wise men and elders that I consider it to be for your advantage and welfare to hear and obey all the commands of the Emperor of Russia, and thus live under his protection, and save your families and property from ruin and destruction.

" If you display repentance and entreat pardon in time, offering your submission and obedience, truthfully and sincerely, I will accept them, and pardon you in the august name of the merciful Emperor.

" (Signed) SCOBELEFF, Aide-de-Camp,
 General in command of
 the Russian Forces."

The Akhals on their part were strongly entrenched, to the number of 10,000 men, at Geuk Tepé, in addition to a body of 700 Merv Turkomans who had joined them. They were much embarrassed by short supplies and an outbreak of cattle plague. Makdum Kuli Khan,* who succeeded the late Nur Verdi Khan as Chief of the Tékés, was in command.

* Mr. R. Thomson, 2nd November 1880.

According to General Scobelev's own report,† published in the Russian press, dated Borjom, 18th (30th) July, that officer conducted the reconnaissance to Geuk Tepé with the object of ascertaining the strength and disposition of the Téké Turkomans assembled at the latter place, and of destroying all the crops and stores of grain and provender between Geuk Tepé and Bami. " General Scobelev issued " from Bami on the 1st (13th) July with a light " column of 3 companies and 3 sotnias of Cossacks, " with 4 light guns, 4 howitzers, 4 mitrailleuse, and " a rocket battery. After some slight skirmishes " with the Turkomans at Archaman, Durun, and " Ak Kala, the column, on the 5th (17th) July, " occupied Egiany‡ and Batyr-Kala. Establishing a " temporary base here, General Scobelev advanced " to the group of villages named Dengil and Geuk " Tepés. The Russian force encountered large " masses of Turkoman horse, and fought its way to " within 1,000 paces of the outworks of the fortified " auls; the works were reconnoitered and the " locality was surveyed, after which the Russian " force returned the same evening to Egiany and " Batyr-Kala, the skirmishers having frequent hand " to hand encounters with the pursuing Turkomans." " Scarcely any loss was sustained on this return " march. On the 7th (19th) July a fresh attack on " the last-named place by the Turkomans was beaten " off, and on the 10th (22nd) the force returned " to Bami, having devastated the crops over a con- " siderable extent of ground, and destroyed large " stores in the villages on the line of march. The " Russian loss during these nine days was 3 killed " and 8 wounded, and 8 horses killed and 13 " wounded. The insignificance of the losses sus- " tained by the Russian column is attributed to " the great length of range and accuracy of their

† Michell's Abstract, No. 21, of August 1880.

‡ Named Izgan on the maps.

“artillery fire. General Scobelev reports that the devastation of the country and the destruction of the Turkoman stores are already having their effects on the Tékés, and are showing results in the death of their cattle. At Geuk Tepé there were 10,000 Tékés, besides 700 men from Merv. On the 6th (18th) and 7th (19th) July several Téké and Merv headmen fell in the encounters which took place.”

According to reports from other sources received by the English press, General Scobelev's reconnaissance had not met with the success attributed to it as above. The English “Globe” * reported:—

* “Globe,” 17th November 1880.

“On the 13th of July Scobelev advanced upon Geuk Tepé with all his artillery and 1,000 men, ostensibly to examine and take plans of the place, but really to see whether he could not clear the Tékés out of their nest by a close and destructive cannonade. Of the feasibility of such an exploit one has only to turn to the account of the operations of Lomakin last year in the ‘disastrous Russian campaign,’ where the eye-witnesses bear record that the batteries were able to march, without resistance, to within 1,000 yards of the aúl, from which, after the first dozen rounds, the Tékés began to retreat helter-skelter. It had been Lomakin's principal error that he had used his cavalry to drive back the fugitives to the aúl, and compel them to fight, whether they wished to or not; and it was thus open to belief that if a strong artillery fire could be maintained at close distance upon the stronghold, and no attempt made to blockade the garrison, the latter, influenced by the frightful losses experienced during the six hours' bombardment in 1879, would abandon the place and its immense supplies to the Russians. Unfortunately Scobelev's expectations were not realized. On reaching, at early dawn on the 18th of July, the heights a thousand yards from the fortified camp or aúl, the Russians found that in the interval the Tékés had enormously increased the thickness of their clay ramparts, and the impenetrability of the casements beneath them. Against the earthen walls of the stronghold the field artillery and rockets made no impression whatever, and when at mid-day the column, with exhausted ammunition cases, commenced its retreat, the Tékés had suffered so insignificant a loss in men and *morale* that they swarmed out after the Russians, and attacked with such pertinacity that Scobelev tells us it took him from one o'clock to sundown to traverse the distance of three and a half miles intervening between Geuk Tepé and his laagered camp. The Turkomans also attacked him again at sunrise the next morning, and clung to his flanks during the whole of the subsequent march to Bami. After this failure it became evident that Geuk Tepé could only be captured by a regular siege, and a

“ further alteration of the plans of the campaign of
“ necessity took place.”

That General Scobelev had encountered greater difficulties than he had anticipated seems apparent from what followed : for after the expedition, further operations were for a time suspended. Thus, the “*Novoye Vremia*” * of the 30th August, learnt that, “ while General Scobelev still continues to reconnoitre the Turkoman country, aggressive operations are, for a time, suspended.” This, the “*Novoye Vremia*” concludes, “ is owing to the defective means of transport. Large numbers of camels have perished, and it is difficult to make the supply meet the demand. The treatment of these animals in military expeditions is the very reverse of the treatment they receive in trading caravans, hence the heavy losses in military service. The Turkomans now part with their camels very unwillingly, and even not without coercion, and drive them beyond reach either into the deserts or across the Persian frontier. This circumstance has led to great loss of time in preparation—a loss of time which the Turkomans have now learned to take advantage of in making entrenchments, &c. ;” hence, the “*Novoye Vremia*” argues, “ a railway should be constructed without further loss of time, which would in a great measure render the troops independent of camel transport, and enable the General to extend his line of operations.”

And, although the “*Moscow Gazette*,” of the 31st August, denied any idea of failure, it said that, “ General Scobelev having established his base at Bami, the point of convergence of the roads to Akhal Téke from Chikislar and Chat, and from Krasnovodsk by the Aïdin Wells, is concentrating his forces, and will prosecute his object to a successful end, when the railway from Michaeloff is completed, a work which will soon be finished.”

And the “*Golos*,” † writing on the 17th September, said, “ Occupying Bami in the Akhal Téke oasis with two lines of communication, one through Kizil Arvat and Michaeloff with Krasnovodsk, and the other through Chat with Chikislar, our force is engaged in the consolidation of that advanced position which is to serve as a base for an advance on Geuk Tepé. The furtherance of this object necessitates the concentration of supplies at Bami and around it, which would amply suffice for the force for an attack on Geuk Tepé, and for its sustenance on establishing a footing in the newly occupied portion of the Akhal oasis. The success of further operations and the rapidity with which they may be carried out will depend on the regularity of the system of forwarding those supplies from Chikislar and Krasnovodsk to Bami, and this again will depend on the means of transport and on the base of locomotion. The Tékes are apparently

* *Mitchell's Abstracts*, No. 37 and 39 of 1880.

† *Mitchell's Abstracts*, No. 42 of 1880.

“ thoroughly acquainted with all these circum-
 “ stances, and are resorting to every possible device
 “ to interfere with the transport of stores. A tele-
 “ gram received last night informs us that the Tékés
 “ are incessantly intercepting our transports, which
 “ consequently have to be guarded by strong
 “ convoys. This system of attack is most suitable
 “ to the Tékés, and necessarily impedes the progress
 “ of the steps we are taking for further action, but,
 “ if we continue to take every precaution against
 “ them, we need not attach undue importance to
 “ these attacks on our rear and flank.

“ The foreign press will, of course, exaggerate
 “ and call each Turkoman raid an important victory
 “ over us, but to such exaggerations we should by
 “ this time be quite accustomed.

“ The circumspection with which General Sco-
 “ belev has so far conducted affairs Trans-Caspian
 “ gives us full confidence in the future, enabling us
 “ to trust that he will promote the interests of the
 “ empire, which looks forward to a permanent paci-
 “ fication of a remote Central Asian border land,
 “ though this work may require sacrifices, but
 “ which does not seek to obtain aimless conquests.”

This suspension of active operations was con-
 firmed from St. Petersburg by Mr. Plunkett, who
 wrote that the chief occupation of the Russian ex-
 peditionary force, so far, was to lay up stores and
 provisions, and to secure their line of communica-
 tion with the Caspian. The advanced post of the
 Russians was reported to be about 70 miles from
 Geuk Tepé.

And the reports circulated to the effect that
 General Scobelev was in difficulties appear to have
 been confirmed in some measure by a conversation
 between M. de Giers and Lord Dufferin† on 21st
 August 1880, when the Russian Minister assured
 our Ambassador that “ although, of course, the
 “ time would come when considerable efforts would
 “ be made to inflict effectual chastisement on the
 “ Tékés, it was very improbable unless General
 “ Scobelev possessed a superhuman genius that
 “ he would be in a position to strike a blow this
 “ year.” He emphatically denied that Merv was
 the ultimate object of the expedition.

In a later conversation, on the 1st of November,
 Baron Jomini told Mr. Plunkett‡ that things were
 not progressing favourably with General Scobelev.
 “ He had to contend not only with the Akhal Téké
 “ in his front, but his convoys were constantly
 “ being interfered with by small bodies of horse-
 “ men hovering about on his line of communication
 “ with the sea.”

It was, in fact, evident that further delay was
 necessary, and that a new scheme of operations was
 contemplated. General Scobelev sent for large rein-
 forcements§ sufficient to double the force he then
 had at his disposal (which was a division of 12,000
 men and 48 guns). It was the general impressi-
 on at St. Petersburg that he would start on a new

* Mr. Plunkett, 17th September 1880.
 Foreign Office, 30th September 1880.

† Lord Dufferin to Earl Granville, 21st
 August 1880.
 Foreign Office, 14th September 1880.

‡ Mr. Plunkett, 3rd November. Foreign
 Office, 16th November 1880.

§ For further details of Russian forces in
 Central Asia, see APPENDIX G.
 Colonel Villiers' Report, 26th August.
 Foreign Office, 15th September 1880.

expedition "about the middle of October," that he was "bound to go to Merv," and that he had hitherto "been too cautious."

The "Globe,"* from an apparently authentic source, describes the intended operations to be as follows:—

"The new scheme of operations has only become disclosed during the last few days, although indications of it have been apparent for a considerable time past. A reference to the map will show that, owing to the narrowness of the Akhal oasis, Geuk Tepé completely bars the road from Krasnovodsk to Merv. There is, however, a way of avoiding Geuk Tepé altogether by advancing from Chat, at the junction of the Sumbar and Atrek rivers, up the valley of the Atrek to a point north of Budjnurd, where the invader can enter Akhal, near Askabad. This route was partly explored by General Lomakin in 1878, and was only rejected on account of two or three months being needed to construct a fortified road through the region. Immediately after the failure in July, Scobelev and Grodekoff repaired from Bami to Chat, and from that moment the second officer has been engaged in certain operations which, we are now informed, have included the construction of a fort mid-way between Chat and Askabad, and the levelling of the road. It is through this fertile region, south of Akhal, that one column will march to Askabad, while a second, under Scobelev, will advance again upon Geuk Tepé. Severed by Grodekoff's column from Merv, and menaced by the immense artillery train supervised by Scobelev, it is extremely probable that the defenders of Geuk Tepé will lose their courage at the last minute and abandon the aul for the desert. The experience of many campaigns in Central Asia has shown that nomads are extremely sensitive to any interception of their line of retreat. The possibility of being cooped up in a place, without chance of retreat, acts so strongly on the imagination of Asiatics that it is a practice of Russian generals, always successful in Caucasia, to leave a loophole of escape, so as to tempt them to evacuate their camps and save the loss of life inseparable from storming operations. It was the non-observance of this practice that led to Lomakin's discomfiture last autumn, and which will not be lost on General Scobelev on this occasion. With a Turkestan force under Colonel Kuropatkin at Charjoi, on the Oxus, nine days' caravan ride from Merv, the Merv Tékés will hardly dare to quit their kalas to assist their kinsmen of Askabad and Geuk Tepé; and hence Scobelev's two columns, consisting of not less than 10,000 men, and armed with artillery, rockets, and mitrailleurs, ought to be able to give a good account of the ill-armed, undrilled mob of horsemen comprising the defensive force of Akhal, and which cannot, under any

NOTE. Mr. Lyall reported from Tiflis, 30th September 1880, that General Scobelev's force had been reinforced by 15 battalions (about 8,000 men) from the cantonments on the Terek. (Foreign Office, 23rd October 1880.)

* "Globe," 17th November 1880.

NOTE.—The direct road from Chat up the valley of the Atrek is stated, by all the best authorities, to be quite impracticable to the passage of an army. An exploration of the route was attempted by the officers of General Lomakin's column in 1878, but had to be abandoned, owing to natural obstacles. The line would further traverse Persian soil in its whole extent, as there can be no question of the upper Atrek valley being part of the Budjnurd territory.

“ circumstances, exceed a strength of 25,000 men.
 “ On this account it is extremely probable that we
 “ shall very speedily hear of the occupation of
 “ Geuk Tepé and the conquest of Akhal, after
 “ which the subjugation of Merv is a matter of
 “ comparative ease.”

And the “Times” of the 26th October 1880,
 say :—

“ Intelligence from Russia shows that General
 “ Scobelev is making his final preparations for an
 “ advance against the Akhal fort at Geuk Tepé.
 “ When the General was intrusted in the spring
 “ with the task of retrieving the defeat of General
 “ Lomakin last year, it was thought that his plan
 “ of campaign would comprise a rapid advance into
 “ the Akhal country and the seizure of some
 “ strategical point beyond the Band-i-Hassan pass
 “ through the Kuren Dagh. And, perhaps, some
 “ such design had assumed form in the mind of
 “ this brilliant general. The full extent of the
 “ difficulties of the enterprise was not revealed to
 “ General Scobelev until he had assumed personal
 “ command of the troops on the further side of the
 “ Caspian, when his active measures were confined
 “ to an advance on the position of Beurma, a fortified
 “ village in the plain below Band-i-Hassan, and a
 “ further reconnaissance towards Geuk Tepé. The
 “ reconnaissance does not appear to have been very
 “ successful, but it accomplished one at least of its
 “ objects in showing that the Turkomans were
 “ collected in force at Geuk Tepé, which they are
 “ resolved to again defend. From that time to the
 “ present the Russian commander has been prin-
 “ cipally occupied in the collection of stores, the
 “ strengthening of his two lines of communication—
 “ that of the Atrek valley and the other across the
 “ desert to Krasnovodsk—and the preparations for
 “ the despatch of several regiments from the
 “ Caucasus as soon as the season for his final
 “ advance has arrived. These proceedings show
 “ that, however tardy the result may be, no reck-
 “ less course is being adopted by the hero of the
 “ Balkans, and in the end they must be crowned
 “ by success. It is true that the Turkomans are
 “ showing, on their side, great activity and no
 “ falling off in courage. The confidence bred of
 “ their great victory last year has not yet been
 “ shaken by any subsequent reverse, and they are
 “ understood to have a conviction of their capacity
 “ to resist Russian arms for an indefinite period.
 “ During the last few weeks they have shown in-
 “ creased activity round the post of Kizil Arvat,
 “ and should their raids continue, the Russian
 “ commanders along the line of communications
 “ will be compelled to assume the offensive sooner
 “ than had been intended. It must also be re-
 “ membered that it is quite open to the Turkoman
 “ leaders, on the advance of the entire Russian
 “ force, to retire from Geuk Tepé to Askabad,
 “ Gavers, or the line of the Tejjen. The fighting
 “ force of the whole Téké tribe can be more easily

"collected at any of those places than at Geuk
 "Tepé, while the difficulties in the enterprise of
 "the Russian commander must increase with each
 "mile that is left between the army and its base.
 "General Scobelev's intention of closing the cam-
 "paign with the capture of Geuk Tepé is based on
 "the assumption that the Turkomans will defend
 "that place to the last extremity. Russian military
 "honour will hardly be satisfied with anything
 "short of the defeat of the Akhals; but it rests
 "with the latter to say where the scene of the
 "decisive battle shall be. In the meanwhile, and
 "apart from the questions of the campaign, there
 "can be no doubt that the Russian hold on the
 "Trans-Caspian region is becoming more firm, and
 "that it must continue to gain solidity and strength
 "is only to give a fresh exemplification of the old
 "law of the inability of the nomad to permanently
 "resist the march of a civilized power. General
 "Annenkoff, who has been appointed to the com-
 "mand of the troops on the line of communications,
 "is actively pushing on the construction of a rail-
 "way from Krasnovodsk, and with the completion
 "of this line to Kizil Arvat, the fate of the Akhal
 "Téké Turkomans will be sealed. It is already
 "finished as far as Molla Kara, at the head of
 "Balkan Bay, and 70 miles on the road from Kras-
 "novodsk to Kizil Arvat. When it has been laid
 "down across the desert intervening between that
 "place and the Kuren Dagh there will be no
 "further difficulty in sending General Scobelev
 "the troops and supplies he may require. With
 "10,000 men and 100 guns—an artillery force
 "almost twice as great as that possessed by General
 "Kaufmann—General Scobelev proposes to attack
 "Geuk Tepé, and whenever he brings that force
 "into the field the Turkomans will have no choice
 "save to make a discreet retreat. Whether that
 "will either satisfy the Russians or bring the war
 "to a conclusion time alone can show."

The "Daily News," of the 26th October 1880,
 also repeats a telegram from Vienna to the following
 effect:—

"General Scobelev is about to visit Livadia in
 "order, according to the 'Neue Presse,' to report
 "to the Czar upon the state of affairs in Central
 "Asia, and to receive instructions in regard to the
 "new expedition against the Téké Turkomans.
 "The tranquillizing accounts which have recently
 "been given upon this subject are, in the opinion
 "of experienced persons, intended specially to lull
 "the suspicions of England. The military pre-
 "parations which are being made are so extensive
 "that it is held as certain that the object of the
 "new expedition is not the Téké Turkomans
 "alone."

Be this as it may, it recently began to be currently
 reported, both at St. Petersburg and Tiflis,* that
 "something more than the subjugation of the
 "Tékés was projected," and, at any rate, some
 colour was given to these reports by the recall of

* Mr. Plunkett, 15th October 1880.
 Foreign Office, 8th November 1880.
 "Bereg," 5th October 1880.
 Consul Lyall, 16th September 1880.
 Foreign Office, 9th October 1880.

General Kaufmann from Kuldja to Tashkend, in order that he should "co-operate with the Akhal column with four battalions," and by the deputation on a special mission, connected ostensibly with supplies, of Colonel Grodekoff to Teheran and Khorassan.

A Mr. Beauclerk, who writes in rather an exaggerated style, but states that he has obtained the information through a gentlemen well versed in military matters who had gained access to some secret Russian correspondence, reports :—*

* To Foreign Office, 6th July 1880.
From Foreign Office, 2nd September 1880.

"My informant maintains that the Russians are moving or are about to move two separate columns of troops in Central Asia, the one starting from Samarkand under the direction of General Kaufmann, the other from the Caspian coast, in the neighbourhood of Krasnovodsk.

"The first column would cross the Amu Daria river, leaving Bokhara on its right, and concentrate with the second column south of Merv, in the district of Maimena, in Afghanistan, the combined strength of the columns to amount to 20,000 men. It is stated that military engineers are preparing roads for the march of the troops starting from Samarkand, that the Russians have nothing to fear on the side of Bokhara, and that the southern portion of their march will be found practicable, although passing through a comparatively unknown and sparsely inhabited district. The march of the column starting from Krasnovodsk will be along the foot of the Kopet Dag mountains, through a fertile region, and it is averred that the Téké Turkomans are rapidly siding with the Russians, and will not oppose their progress. It remains to be seen whether complications with the Chinese will retard or prevent these movements, and whether the Russians will be able to overcome the difficulties of transport service for two such long lines of march, and the hitherto existing hostility of the Tékés."

Touching this point, the opinion of Sir H. Rawlinson, as recorded on the 8th September 1880, is of value. He writes :—

"Information, indeed, has reached us from several distinct sources during the present year that General Kaufmann, convinced of the possibility of crossing the desert in force from Charjoi, on the Oxus, to Merv, has been making arrangements to support General Scobelev's advance from the Caspian, by detaching an expeditionary column from Samarkand, which would cross the Oxus north of Balkh, and thence follow the skirts of the Paropamisan range to the Murgháb, descending that river subsequently to Merv. There is no Maimena stream running into the Murgháb, as Lord Northbrook supposes, and Mr. Beauclerk's idea of the two columns from Samarkand and the Caspian concentrating at Maimena is nonsense. The most practicable and best supplied road from

Note.—For a curious series of questions on this point from the Austrian Officers at Teheran to their Government, see APPENDIX E, already mentioned.

“ the Oxus is that followed by Colonel Grodekoff, which passes by Mazar-i-Sharif, Sir-i-pul, and Maimena, striking the Oxus at Bala Murgháb ; but to march a Russian column along this line would require Afghan co-operation, and that, under present circumstances, would probably be withheld. There is, however, a route further west, by Andkhoy, and along the extreme skirts of the range, which is beyond Afghan jurisdiction, and which, in former times, was the high road, passing through the now deserted towns of Fariyáb and Talikan, and striking the Murgháb near Panjdeh. There are water and supplies along this line, and with the assistance of the Uzbegs of Andkhoy and Maimena, who are much under Bokhara influence, it would be practicable to a Russian column of four or five thousand men, which would be the utmost strength required for this co-operating force. The two columns from the Caspian and Samarkand would then concentrate on Merv itself.”

Whatever may be the ultimate aim of General Scobelev's operations, it does not seem probable that he can extend them for the present beyond Geuk Tepé. During the month of November 1880 reports were received of his intended advance on that place, inasmuch as he had obtained permission* to establish depôts at three different places within the Persian frontier for the collection and storing of provisions for the use of the Russian forces.

The Russian troops at Bami and Beurma were all this time greatly harassed† by the Turkomans.

The situation at this period of General Scobelev's force is thus summed up by the “ *Russki Vedomosti* ” :—†

“ General Scobelev has under his command eight battalions of the 21st Division of infantry, which have in all probability been placed on a war footing. Until the question of supplies is satisfactorily settled, the smallest force possible is maintained on the eastern shore of the Caspian. The transport of supplies depends upon the successful construction of the Trans-Caspian railway, on which it may be remarked General Scobelev does not base any special hopes, as he is of opinion that in consequence of the high winds prevalent in the steppe it may easily be covered with sand, and therefore the General attaches only temporary significance to this railroad. On the other hand, General Annenkoff, who is superintending the work of construction, regards the railway as absolutely necessary, and promises to finish it in a short time. The duration of the expedition depends on the construction of the line, as it is intended to transport all supplies and reinforcements on it, and when this has been done, a decisive blow will be struck in regard to the Tékés. By that time the Stavropol and Crimean regiments, which are at present at Petrofsk, are expected to arrive, as also a division of the Tver dragoon regiment and four batteries of

* Mr. Plunkett, 15th October 1880.
Foreign Office, 8th November 1880.

† Mr. R. Thomson, 2nd November 1880.

‡ Mr. Plunkett, 19th October 1880.
Foreign Office, 10th November 1880.

the 20th and 21st artillery brigades. If the Tékés surrender Geuk Tepé without resistance, the expedition will probably be brought to a close, as its object has lost much of its original importance since the advent to power of the present English Ministry. It is intended to concentrate 10,000 men and about 100 guns in order to take the fort of Geuk Tepé. General Scobelev finds it necessary to be continually moving between Bami, Chikislar, and Krasnovodsk. It is thought that the expedition will be finished by February next. Colonel Verbitsky commands the advanced detachment, Colonel Artsicheskoy is in command of the rear, and Colonel Grodekoff, who returned recently from a mission to Persia, is Chief of the Staff."

A communication from the Foreign Office of the 17th December enclosed a letter from the Military Attaché at St. Petersburg,* which ran as follows:—

* Colonel Villiers to Mr. Plunkett, 1st December 1880.

Foreign Office, 17th December 1880.

" I have the honour to inform you that General Comte Heyden (Chief of the Staff and Administrator of the War Department in the absence of Comte Miliutine) told me last week that General Scobelev was still at or near Krasnovodsk on the Caspian; that the expedition against the Tékés would start from Kizil Arvat in about one week from this date; that provisions for six weeks were stored at the last named place for the whole force (about 10,000 men); finally, that he trusted General Scobelev would not take more than three weeks over the whole business, *i.e.*, be back in Kizil Arvat within that time. With regard to the results of the campaign, he said the present expedition was necessary as a sop to the Grand Duke Michael and the army of the Caucasus. He discarded, most emphatically, the idea that the Russian Government had any intention of pushing on a force to Merv, and that when once the wounded *amour propre* of the southern forces was healed, he believed that Kizil-Arvat would be abandoned, and the line thence to Krasnovodsk left to rot, the Russians confining themselves to the Caspian sea board.

" There is every reason to believe that these views of Comte Heyden are not shared by the War Minister and those who have the ear of the Emperor. The railway from Krasnovodsk is being pushed on towards Kizil Arvat at great expense, though not one third of the line can be available for the present expedition, and this alone points to a permanent occupation of the latter place. On the whole, the Trans-Caspian force has met with so many difficulties, and has shown itself so slow in overcoming them, that I do not consider that General Scobelev will be able to go further eastward than Geuk-Tepé this year, and after reaching that place occupy himself with strengthening his line of communications.

“ The sickness among the Trans-Caspian troops has been very great, but it is said that their health is now improving. I cannot, at present, obtain any reliable data as to the percentage of sick in the force, or the force, or the number of baggage animals that have been lost.

“ General Heyden denied that the Russian Government had any intention of concentrating a force on the Oxus to co-operate from the north with General Scobelev, as reported in some of the Russian newspapers. It is possible that the small force now assembling to form the escort for Colonel Krabbe’s surveying expedition on the Oxus may have given rise to this idea.”

Subsequent information received in this Office from St. Petersburg* states that on the 14th December General Scobelev started from Bami for Geuk Tepé, with 4,500 infantry and six batteries of artillery. On the same day he sent forward the cavalry belonging to his force, consisting of four squadrons and a considerable number of Cossacks, with orders to push on as rapidly as possible, and cut off the expected Turkoman retreat from Geuk Tepé. Two days later General Ernestoff followed with 5,000 infantry, and two days later again General Annenkoff left with 4,000 more infantry. General Scobelev expected to reach Geuk Tepé on the 28th December. He proposed to do all the fighting with his own column; the second column was to construct fortified forts, and the third was to form a strong rearguard. From subsequent telegraphic reports† received from Teheran, it appears that General Scobelev attacked Geuk Tepé on the 24th December, and that, although the Turkomans suffered severely at the outset from artillery fire, the Russians were eventually defeated with loss, and forced to retreat to Bami. These reports are corroborated by press telegrams from St. Petersburg, but are not yet officially confirmed by the Russian Government.

The latest report that we have on the subject of the campaign is one received from the British Consul at Tiflis,‡ who states that General Scobelev intends to attack Geuk Tepé again on the 9th of January with 12,000 men, and that a decisive battle was to be expected, which would finish the campaign. Mr. Lyall adds, that the Russians “lost 400 killed and wounded in the last fighting.”

O. T. B.

India Office,
31st December 1880.

NOTE.—A later letter from Colonel Villiers, dated 22nd December 1880 (Foreign Office, 5th January 1881), states that Count Miliutine had informed him that General Scobelev had neither intention nor means of advancing at present on Merv, and that there was no force collecting on the Oxus to co-operate from the north with the Akhal force in the direction of that place. Count Miliutine acknowledged that during the summer a small force had been assembled about Charjoi to draw the attention of the Turkomans away from the Kizil Arvat operations, but that the Russians never expected to make much of that route from Charjoi; the absence of water is too great a difficulty to overcome.” Colonel Villiers adds his own opinion, that “there can be no reasonable doubt as to the ultimate success of the expedition, for the force is well equipped, and sufficiently strong to accomplish the object intended, while the Commander is a tried man, and worthy of full confidence.”

* Colonel Villier’s Report, 29th December 1880.

Foreign Office, 4th January 1881.

NOTE.—If this Report be accurate, it appears that General Scobelev’s force is larger than has hitherto been reported. It consists, according to this paper, of 48 guns and about 18,950 men, viz.,—

Artillery, six batteries, *i.e.*, 48 guns and say 1,950 men.

Cavalry, four squadrons of Dragoons (512 men), and say 1,800 Cossacks = 1,500.

Infantry = 15,500.

Or about 18,950 men in all.

† Mr. Thomson’s telegram, 26th December 1880.

‡ 5th January 1881.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

Report of Mr. O'DONOVAN on the Rivers Atrek and Gurgan.

Notes on the River Gurgan.

(Enclosed in Mr. Thomson's Letter, No. 96, of 22nd April 1880.)

The river Gurgan, as far as I have seen it, viz, from a mile above Ak-Kala to its mouth, has an average width of 25 or 30 paces. Just below Gumush Tepé its breadth increases to about 40 yards.

Judging from analogy with the Atrek, I should say the Gurgan preserves the same dimensions for a long way eastward.

Even during the hottest portion of the year when the water is lowest, the river is fordable only at a few points below Ak-Kala. These points are known as *bents* by the Turkomans, and the fordable line runs obliquely across the stream. These earth ridges are, I believe, artificial, and constructed to check the flow of the river when flooded, so as to force the water into the irrigation canals. During the greater portion of the space indicated the river is not fordable, having an average depth of six to seven feet when lowest. In some places it is two or three feet deeper owing to the existence of holes.

The river bank for the most part is an almost vertical earth cliff, going sheer down to the water's edge. At Ak-Kala the height of the bank above low water is about 14 or 16 feet. Access is obtained to the fords either by some roughly torn rain gully or by a steep ramp worn parallel to the river by the descent of camels and horses. The river bank gradually diminishes in height towards the mouth. From the river's mouth to a point four miles above it the river is altogether unfordable.

At Gumush Tepé the centre of the stream has a depth of 10 to 12 feet which become two or three feet more during the prevalence of the sudden and violent winds from the westward, of frequent occurrence on the Eastern Caspian coast, and styled by the Turkomans *tenkis*. On such occasions the sea water is forced into the channel to a distance of a mile above Gumush Tepé, that of the river becoming altogether undrinkable, and remaining so for three or four hours after the cessation of the storm. On the appearance of the premonitory signs of wind the inhabitants hastily collect a supply of fresh water for the ensuing 24 hours.

The river Gurgan winds but little. Nearly opposite to Astrabad it suddenly turns to the northwards, preserving that direction during 10 or 12 miles of its course, and then again resumes its course eastward to the sea.

A mile above Gumush Tepé the height of the river bank does not exceed five or six feet, and at the village itself is not more than three at low water. This height it preserves down to its mouth.

Gumush Tepé is, as well as I can guess, nearly two miles from the mouth of the Gurgan, and possesses about 120 *loodkas*, or fishing and coasting luggers. They are mostly half decked, the largest measuring about 36 feet in length, having two masts, and when heavily laden drawing four to five feet of water. When not at sea these luggers are anchored along the river bank within the river itself. There are generally 50 or 60 there at a time. There is no bar or obstruction at the mouth of the river, at least none which affects the passage of these luggers, even when laden to the water's edge entirely with firewood from Gez or leaving charged with hay for Chikislar.

On the left bank, a mile below Gumush Tepé, is an Armenian establishment for drying fish. It is a large wooden house built on piles and projecting into the river. At the mouth itself, also to the left, is another fishing establishment and a large weir.

The exact soundings at the mouth of the river and further out will be found very accurately laid down in the Russian charts. Off Chikislar the nine-foot soundings

are two miles out; steamers are obliged to lie close on three miles from the shore. I believe the soundings are very nearly the same off the Gurgan, though, I believe, the latter are slightly deeper.

At the present moment the Gurgan is altogether unfordable, the water being in the upper portions of the channel at least eight feet above the midsummer level. The Turkomans expect its overflow at any moment, and have prepared their irrigation canals.

Even when the water is lowest the *loodkas* can and do go a couple of miles above Gumush Tepé. At present they could go laden as far as Ak-Kala bridge by being towed. When the river is at its ordinary level, the current has a speed of about half a mile per hour; during flood it is between three and four miles per hour.

The water of the Gurgan is very good for human consumption, being quite free from saline matter; and it is only during flood time that it contains any considerable amount of loam in suspension. At Gumush Tepé the bed of the river consists of a blue black and very adhesive loamy clay.

Notes on the Atrek.

I have seen the Atrek from a point a few miles above Chat, where it joins the Sumbar, to its mouth near Hassan Kuli. Until close to the delta, it flows along the bottom of a steep-sided ravine ranging in breadth from three quarters of a mile to four hundred yards, and in depth from forty to sixty feet to the ordinary water level.

The bottom of this ravine is more or less flat, and in its midst is the river channel, which winds very much and with a canal-like regularity of banks. This channel varies in width, being sometimes twenty to thirty, sometimes only twelve feet wide. Its ordinary depth is from five to six feet, but there are very many places where it is much deeper. The sides of the river channel slope regularly at one angle of forty-five degrees, and owing to the slippery nature of the loamy soil when moistened, and which there resembles a soaped board, it is almost impossible to get out of the water without assistance, or even to stand in the water within one's depth, as the sides slope together in V form. As a consequence, there are only certain places where it is possible to bathe. The fordable points are at long intervals, and only exist from the latter end of August to the end of January. When I was at Chat in the month of April last, the river channel was quite full and entirely unfordable, except at one point about a quarter of a mile below Chat, where the Cossacks were in the habit of crossing in search of forage on the plains beyond.

The infantry made use of a small raft, on which they ferried themselves to and fro by means of a stout rope stretched from either bank. The breadth of the river at this point was about thirty-five feet. Except at certain places the river is inaccessible to four-footed animals, and over its greater extent to men also, owing to the perpendicular nature and great height of the sides of the ravine.

These sides are of stiff yellowish white marl, baked by the sun to the consistency of Portland stone. Great masses, detached by their own weight, stand apart from the bank like great obelisks, and in places the ravine wall is torn into a thousand fanciful and castle-like shapes by winter rain floods from the plains above. All around the intrenched camp of Chat the ground is seamed and scarred by torrent beds, which mostly all disappear within a hundred yards of the edge of the cliff, and burrowing into the earth appear again at its base in the form of caves.

These burrows make the approach to the camp very dangerous; camels and horses have fallen into these owing to the ground crumbling away under their feet, and have had to be dug out below. As a consequence, the road leading to the gate of the intrenchments winds in such a manner that after dark it is excessively dangerous to try and follow it, especially on horseback. On the northern side of the Atrek, immediately to the west of Chat, are a series of deep steep sided ravines by which the winter rainfall makes its way to the river.

The Sumbar flows through a ravine precisely similar to that of the Atrek, and its immediate channel is about the same dimensions; but it ordinarily contains much less water. In April, when the average depth of the Atrek was from five to six feet, the

Sumbar close to its junction with the latter had little more than a foot of water, and one crossed it by an easy leap. The great size of the ravine, however, indicates that, at times, the mass of water must be very considerable. The dimensions of the channel itself also seem to prove this. Notwithstanding the great depth to which both rivers have cut their channels, there is not a single pebble of the smallest description to be found, the only solid matter apart from the indurated clay to be found being fragments of ancient brick and white glazed tiles and nodules of vitreous scoria from the kilns in which they were made.

Small as was the quantity of water in the Sumbar, it was an almost insuperable obstacle to camels even when not laden. On one occasion, I watched four of these animals trying in vain to cross over. They even tried creeping on their knees up the smooth sloping channel bank, but they invariably slipped back into the stream. It was only by means of ropes that they could be got out. The water of the Atrek is in summer very brackish, and it is at all times much charged with suspended marl. A bucket of it allowed to stand for an hour deposits over an inch of fine yellow mud.

The water of the Sumbar is considerably more saline and charged with salt. The troops had orders to procure water for culinary and drinking purposes from the Atrek, above its junction with the Sumbar.

I believe that the great prevalence of scurvy at Chat was due to the use of this saline water quite as much as to the absence of fresh vegetables.

At the junction of the rivers, there is an eddy, and this has excavated a kind of basin, some forty feet wide and very deep. All along the water marge and in the ravine of both rivers the bush known as *saksaoul*, grows in considerable quantities, and is the only fuel obtainable. For a long way above and below Chat, these bushes have been cut away by the troops, who are now obliged to use naphtha refuse (*astathi*) for cooking purposes. Ordinarily the current of both rivers is about half a mile an hour; but, when flooded, the stream has the rapidity of a mill race. Judging from the water marks in the ravine outside the regular channel, the Atrek must sometimes have a depth of from twenty-five to thirty feet.

At the place called Bayat Haji, the third station along the Atrek from Chikislar, the ravine has its greatest dimensions, being over three quarters of a mile wide. Here it forms an immense irregular amphitheatre, with masses of earth standing like islands in its midst, while the river zigzags very much after doubling back on itself. At Yaghi Olum, too, the next station, the ravine is very wide, and the sides much torn by torrents. At Gudoi, the second station from Chikislar, the ground suddenly falls towards the west, and the ravine disappears, or rather opens out into a great wide hollow plain towards Delilli, where the latter may be said to commence. From Delilli to the point where the Atrek enters the lagoon of Hassan Kuli, the distance is about 25 or 30 miles.

From Yaghi Olum to Gudoi the course of the river is nearly due south, but at the latter station it turns to the east. Formerly, about five miles from the lagoon, it turned northward, entering the latter nearly opposite Hassan Kuli. Now it bends to the south, and, skirting the edge of a long low hill known as the Dengli Tepé or Goklan Tepé, flows into the lagoon one third of its length from the southern extremity. The Russian staff map marks in its old position, or rather one of its old positions, for there are many channels across the delta. The efforts made by the Russian working party under Colonel Skelhovnikoff, to turn the river northward by destroying the drain (dam?) at Bent, near Gudoi, have been entirely unsuccessful. The only result has been the formation of a couple of marshy lakes at Delilli and Boynu Nashi, the water of which is unfit for use, owing to its stagnation and the decaying vegetable matter which it contains. Owing to the amount of water absorbed by these marshes, and the quantity drawn off by irrigation canals to the Turkoman fields of corn, the Atrek within two or three miles of the lagoon is greatly diminished in volume. I have crossed it repeatedly at the point where the telegraph line passes, and never found it above three feet deep and thirty wide. Entering the lagoon it turns slightly northward, and reaches the sea by a passage half a mile wide between the two land spits which, running nearly north and south, separate the water of the lagoon from the sea. Shortly after entering the lagoon the Atrek becomes unfordable, so that, when passing from Hassan Kuli to the Persian side in a canoe, my horse has had to swim nearly half a mile, apart from wading as much more in deep water.

The lagoon of Hassan Kuli varies in size according to the season and the state of the wind. Owing to the extreme flatness of the shore, a wind from a westerly direction forces the sea water sometimes three to four versts inland. I should say that the usual length of the lagoon is about 20 miles, and its breadth five or six.

It is, to a great extent, navigable by loodkas, many of which are to be seen anchored at Hassan Kuli, in the lagoon. The village of Hassan Kuli stands on the inside or eastern edge of the northern landspit, and about three miles from its extremity. The road to Chikishlar passes among some sand hills, where there is a Turkoman cemetery, and thence along the shore to the camp. The distance is twelve versts. I have walked it in an hour and a half.

There is no stream of water, or even any trace of an old channel between it and Chikishlar. Even the turning of the Atrek to its old channel would still leave it on Russian territory. The effect of this latter would be to give back to Persia a triangular piece of territory having a base of about twenty miles, and its apex at Gudoi, sixty versts from the old lagoon.

APPENDIX B.

Russian Opinion on the Téké Expedition of 1879.

Russian Abstract, No. L., 1879.

The "Moscow Gazette," No. 168, 3rd (15th) July, has the following leader on the subject of the Turkoman expedition, which is based on a communication from its own correspondent with the forces. The supplementary sheet of the "Gazette" has not come to hand, so that a portion of the communication is missing.

The expedition to the country of the Akhal-Tékés has started. The vanguard marched out on the 6th (18th) of July, and is now probably far on its way. The main forces had not left the camp up to the 12th (24th) July, for the reason, probably, that the number of camels essentially necessary had not been obtained up to that date.

This expedition is being provided for in all ways with care. The force is numerous, and the means of transport are planned on a large scale. "The Téké column," our correspondent says, "is considered a very large one, and, indeed, it exceeds even the force with which General von Kaufmann operated against Khiva." According to this its complement is not less than 15 or 16 battalions, some tens of sotnias and of squadrons, with an equal number of guns.

Such a force necessarily requires a very large train. This is composed partly of carts and partly of camels. The wheeled transport consists of 1,500 arabas, and 3,000 camels were to have been collected. Independent, however, of this, horses and mules, with drivers, had been hired in Persia, some of these having already joined the force.

Nor are the resources of the enemy insignificant either. The Akhal-Tékés number 500,000 souls, and they can place as many as 30,000 tolerably well armed in the field, but they lack organization, and, as all our previous campaigns in Central Asia have proved, a force like this cannot contend against a Russian force even smaller than that which is now advancing against them.

It may appear strange that so large a force should have been organized for the purpose, and this it is that has given rise to those numerous surmises in regard to the mysterious object of General Lazareff's expedition, who, in the opinion of the majority of foreign politicians, has, doubtless, some aim which passes far beyond the limits of a modest expedition into the country of the Akhal-Téké. They suppose that Merv is the strategical object of the campaign.

Russian Abstract, No. LIII., 1879.

Communicated to the "Russian Invalid" (No. 179, 17th (29th) August) "from the Trans-Caspian Steppes," under date the 28th June (10th July):—

"Until lately the Persian authorities never ventured among the Turkoman population, which they considered was subject to Persia. It is well known that in the year 1869 the river Atrek was constituted the line of frontier between the Russian and Persian dominions. The country situated between the Atrek and the Gurgan is therefore held to be Persian territory. The Persians raised a fort, named Ak-Kala, on the Gurgan, but to the north of this fort they do not dare to show themselves, and if any one of them has appeared north of the Gurgan he has not been seen without a chain round his neck in the capacity of a captive among the Turkomans. When the Governor General visits Ak-Kala he does so with a force of from three to four thousand men. On each occasion of our occupying Chikislar the Turkoman inroads into the Astrabad province have abated or even entirely ceased, so that we have rendered a great service to the population of that province, yet the Persian officials sheltered themselves all the same under the cover of their guns at Ak-Kala. Having now learned that Russian troops under the command of General Lazareff are being landed at Chikislar, the Persian authorities are assuming an air, and are venturing, not only on the north of the Gurgan, but even north of the Atrek, *i.e.*, they are making their appearance on our territory. Thus in the month of June last a certain engineer, named Asker-Khan, an officer in the service of the Persian Government, made his appearance at Hassan-Kuli, and declared that he had instructions to erect a fort at that place and three others on the Atrek. When the officer commanding the detachment heard this, he sent the local military superintendent to him to request him either to withdraw, seeing that Hassan-Kuli was on Russian territory, or to produce the papers authorizing him to build a fort in Hassan-Kuli village. Asker-Khan told the Russian officer that he was on Persian ground and would not present himself before the Russian authorities. Whilst the superintendent was reporting this matter to the commanding officer, Asker-Khan left Hassan-Kuli and commenced some surveys at a distance of seven versts from Chikislar. Asker-Khan was then again invited into camp, when, in the presence of General Lazareff, he firmly maintained that Hassan Kuli belonged to Persia, and that he was in his right when he declined, on Persian territory, to obey the commands of the Russian General. A map was shown to Asker-Khan, and he was told that if he placed no reliance on a Russian map, an English map should be shown him. Asker-Khan identified the Atrek himself, and passed his finger along that river to its embouchure in Hassan-Kuli bay. He then traced a line across that bay to the spit on which the aul of Hassan-Kuli is situated. This line ran north of Hassan-Kuli, and Asker-Khan triumphantly declared to us that the aul appertained to Persia. We pointed out to him, on the other hand, that if he were to continue his line right across the Caspian, Lenkoran and even Baku would be transferred to Persia, that a sea coast was admitted throughout all the world to constitute a frontier, and that having traced the Atrek to its mouth he should not continue the line further along the banks of that river but draw it along the shore of Hassan-Kuli bay. This process, we assured him, would convince him that Hassan-Kuli belonged not to Persia but to us. Asker-Khan paused to think, and then informed us that he had an old map by which all Persian authorities were guided. On this map Hassan-Kuli bay is not shown, and the Atrek is made to fall direct into the sea north of Hassan-Kuli. We observed that whatever had been must be left out of the question, for that the place on which we stood had been, it was believed, covered by the sea, which at one time extended far to the east; that we should accept the earth's surface as it now presents itself, and that it now results that Hassan-Kuli is on Russian territory. Whether we succeeded in convincing Asker-Khan of this fact is a matter of uncertainty, but personally he produced on all the impression of a highly respectable individual. General Lazareff was courteous to him, presented him with a gold watch, and allowed him to depart in peace to his own country."

Russian Abstract, No. LVI., 1879.

The "Molva" is entirely of accord with Professor Marten in his argument respecting the bad effects to both England and Russia of a constant rivalry and of a policy of doing injury one to the other.

"The perfect accuracy of this conclusion," the "Molva" says, "cannot but be admitted, and admitting it, we could not but regret the sad event of a Russian occupation of Merv." "And why," asked the "Molva," "do we want Merv? As it is we have immense tracts of country in Central Asia, the possession of which has, up to the present, only involved us in enormous expenditure without bringing us any advantages. Merv can only increase our expenses without adding to the benefits derived from our Central Asian possessions. The occupation of Merv would, on the other hand, be only a fresh menace to England, a fresh challenge to which England could not possibly remain indifferent. We cannot ignore the fact that England is only acting on the defensive in Central Asia, while we are ever advancing, not to seize anything from England, but in order to threaten her with an Indian campaign, and by that very means to make her more conciliatory in the matter of our miserable quarrel over the Dardanelles.

"A threat of an Indian campaign from our present position in Central Asia would have no terrors for England, because such a campaign is next to impossible, but the threat of an Indian campaign from Merv would convey an idea of such practicability that England would be obliged to adopt measures against such an eventuality.

"Is it necessary for us to continue this antagonism? Is the dispute over the Dardanelles worth those great sacrifices which we bring to it? and were it not much better for us to waive the question entirely? In answering these questions we cannot forget that we can continue the dispute over the Dardanelles only at the cost of our financial ruin, and it is our own opinion that the game is not worth the candle."

 Russian Abstract, No. LVIII., 1879.

The "Golos," No. 242, 2nd (14th) September says,—

"In order to obtain positive results, it is necessary to act openly and decisively. The present moment is a most favourable one for a contest with England in Central Asia, but before determining upon such a course all the circumstances should be taken into careful consideration, and first of all the political situation in Europe should be cautiously weighed. The result of such consideration may be an assurance of the uselessness of the Akhal-Téké expedition. . . . Russia has first to establish proper relations with her nearest neighbours on the west, and to consolidate the system which she has established in the Balkan peninsula at the cost of such great sacrifice. . . . If she must advance in Central Asia she had much better march direct upon Herat than waste her energies in the barren Turkoman desert."

The same paper, No. 246, 6th (18th) September, proceeds to argue that the Akhal-Téké expedition has already cost eight millions of roubles for its organization alone, including provisions and supplies. "This is paying too dear," the "Golos" says, "for the mere chastisement of the Turkomans, and for merely establishing a post at Chat, and for occupying a piece of territory bounded on the one side by the Caspian and on the others by the roads from Krasnovodsk and Chikislar to Kizil-Arvat." The "Golos" foresees that, if such be the intention, this enterprise will be a source of perpetual outlay, and it challenges the advocates of the expedition to declare the real object which it is meant to achieve.

The "St. Petersburg Gazette," No. 245, 7th (19th) September, observes the difficulties and embarrassments of the Akhal-Téké expedition are more and more evident to the public. "As yet," it says, "no one seems to know the object of the advance, and the more the matter has been studied, the more convinced is everybody in the impossibility of assigning an object. The equipment of the force has cost an immense amount of money, its maintenance in the steppes is costing still more. All correspondence is forbidden, and the "Russian Invalid" is now only publishing under

“ directions details referable to June last. While Captain Kuropatkin assures us that there is no direct road to Merv from the Caspian, which can be reached only by way of Khiva and Bokhara, or through the Persian dominions.”

The same paper, No. 247, 9th (21st) September, continues to say,—

“ We can operate upon Afghanistan only from Turkestan, where we are immediately conterminous with northern Afghanistan. Those who connect the trans-Caspian expedition which is directed against Merv with the operations of the English in Afghanistan are grossly mistaken, and, should the trans-Caspian force even reach Merv, operations from that place against Herat would prove to be incomparably more difficult than operations from Bokhara, which is entirely in our power. . . .

“ At the same time the advance to Merv is a matter well worthy of consideration. Is it worth while to attempt to reach that place ?

“ We know very well that our forces were on the frontier before ever the English invaded Afghanistan, and that it was only an order from the supreme authorities that stopped the expedition, which, of course, did not contemplate the occupation of Merv—a place of so little consequence that no Russian officer or merchant has ever visited it.

“ The calmness with which the English regarded the trans-Caspian expedition is the best proof of the political insignificance of Merv.”

APPENDIX C.

Opinions of Her Majesty's Minister at Teheran and the late Sir Louis Cavagnari on Russian movements in the Akhal Country.

No. 217.

My Lord,

Teheran, 1st September 1879.

Every measure taken by the Russians in connection with the present Atrék expedition indicates, in the event of its success, the permanent occupation of the whole of the Akhal country. The number of troops engaged, the rank, position, and antecedents of the officers employed, and the importance attached throughout Russia to its operations show that the object in view is not, as pretended, the simple chastisement of the Akhal Tékés and the repression of their predatory attacks. Nor can it be accepted that it is with a view to preserve the Russian lines of communication, either, as was previously asserted, for objects of trade between Krasnovodsk and Khiva, or, as lately alleged by Count Schouvaloff, for the protection of a chain of military ports uniting Krasnovodsk and Chikislar by a curved line. There is no trade across the steppe to justify the former assertion, and it may be observed with reference to the latter, that the establishment of these military posts which require protection must have some, as yet unexplained, ulterior object of an importance commensurate with the scale of the present operations, while the curved line referred to by Count Schouvaloff would add over 500 miles to the distance between the two points named, which, in a straight line, is under 150 miles.

But the permanent occupation of Akhal would of itself justify the effort and outlay now being made ; and, supposing that it did, the same reasons which now induce the Russians to advance on Akhal will impel them to attack the Merv section of the tribe when they are brought face to face with them on the Tejjén ; and plausible pretexts for further aggression are never wanting to Russia in her dealings with the Turkoman tribes, or indeed with any other Asiatic nationality.

Guided by past experience, then, and looking to the natural course of events and to the obvious motives by which the Russians are actuated in their Central Asian policy, it is impossible to arrive at any other conclusion than that Merv is unquestionably the goal at which they aim.

The Russian Government, it is true, has, both in St. Petersburg and in London, disclaimed any “ intention ” of interfering with or occupying Merv. This word is one frequently employed in Russian diplomacy. It is sufficiently vague to commit to nothing, but, looked at in the light of the result of its use on former occasions, it would appear to be a phrase little calculated to inspire confidence.

In 1869, in answer to an autograph rescript addressed by the Shah to the Russian Legation, protesting emphatically against the Russian advance to the Atrek, unless under certain conditions, one of which was that they should not erect forts in its neighbourhood, the Russian minister gave a written assurance to His Majesty in the name of the Emperor that Russia "had no intention" of erecting such forts, but this has not prevented her from building forts at Chat and Chikislar; other instances might be brought forward, but it is sufficient to allude to the assurances given with reference to Khiva, previous to its occupation, to justify the suspicion aroused by the renewed employment of this word "intention."

The value to be put on such Russian assurances generally may be gauged by the fact that, at the same moment that Baron Jomini was assuring Lord Dufferin that the strictest orders had been given to respect Persian rights and territory, the Commander of the expedition was not only, in defiance of the remonstrances of the Persian Government, treating as Russian subjects the Yamuts on the Atrek, whose allegiance to Persia the Shah had in his rescript of 1869 made a *sine qua non* to his assent to the Russians advancing their frontier up to that river, but was also, in the face of similar remonstrances, occupying the Karee Kala districts.

This latter movement would indicate that the Russians purpose to occupy the whole of the Upper Atrek valley on the right bank of the river, which may, not improbably, lead to their interference also with Deregez and Kelat; but, in any case, it would appear that they can hardly reach Merv without passing through Sarakhs, and I would observe that these three places are all under Persian administration and as absolutely Persian territory as are Shiraz or Ispahan. Sarakhs is, moreover, a garrisoned fort occupied by Persian soldiers. Abiverd too, which appears to be the point indicated by Count Schouvaloff as the limit of the present expedition, is absolutely within the Persian frontier, forming as it does, part of the district of Deregez; and the probability of the Russians not respecting Persian territorial rights over these districts is foreshadowed by the fact that in their recent maps they have significantly marked both Deregez and Sarakhs as situated outside the Persian frontier.

The manifest advantages to be gained by Russia by the possession of Merv would at once justify the assumption that its occupation was the object of the expedition, and warrant the enormous expense incurred in its prosecution. She would not only thereby complete her line of communication from the Caucasus to the Oxus, and at the same time in Baron Jomini's words to Lord Dufferin, "furnish herself with a "base of operations against England hereafter," but she would attain a commanding position over Herat.

Merv once occupied, two small Turkoman tribes, the Saryk and the Salor, will alone remain between the Russians and the Herat frontier. It is not to be supposed that these will long survive the fate of their powerful neighbours at Merv, and the occupation of their territory along the Murghab river will bring the Russians within 25 or 30 miles of the city of Herat.

The moment has therefore now arrived when the Herat question must be looked straight in the face, and the point be decided, while there is yet time, whether England can afford to allow Herat to fall into the possession of Russia or not.

Hitherto Herat has been universally considered as of vital importance to our Indian empire, and the possibility of its possession by Russia has not been entertained. Now, however, in view of the present Russian advance, the question arises whether Herat shall be under English or Russian domination. But should Russia occupy Merv, with the Murghab districts, she will then be in a position which might leave us no voice in the settlement of this question.

So long as Russia does not occupy Merv we can remain quietly in the neighbourhood of Kandahar, for thence we could reach Herat first.

Should Russia, however, take Merv, it seems to me that we ought, not only to hold Kandahar, but to take measures to place Herat under our protectorate and control, to be substituted, in case of necessity, by immediate military occupation.

The Russian Government are sufficiently aware of the importance of Herat to make it probable that they would hesitate to precipitate the occupation of that place by England, if it was intimated to them on the part of Her Majesty's Government that such would be the consequence involved by the Russian occupation of Merv.

The Marquis of Salisbury, K.G.,
&c. &c. &c.

I have, &c.,
(Signed) RONALD F. THOMSON.

Enclosure in Government of India, No. 205 (Secret) of 25th September 1879.

From Major Sir LOUIS CAVAGNARI, K.C.B., C.S.I., Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary, Kabul, to A. C. LYALL, Esq., C.B., Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, Simla. (No. 28, dated 30th August 1879, Confidential).

In compliance with your cipher message of the 25th instant, I telegraphed to you yesterday my opinion regarding the Russian expedition into the Téké-Turkoman country. I have now the honour to lay before you in greater detail the views I hold on this important subject.

2. The object of this expedition is said to be the punishment of the Akhal-Tékés in order to put a stop to their predatory habits. The slave-trade carried on by these habitual robbers has also been prominently put forward by the Russian press as a kind of appeal to the sympathies of Europe in this work of civilization! A season fraught with domestic difficulties and financial embarrassment is not the time that any nation would select for the prosecution of such philanthropical designs. The true object Russia has in view in fitting out, regardless of expense, an expedition superior in every way to any she has yet organized for her Central Asian campaigns, is not difficult to discover. Lomakin's repulse by the Turkomans, and the diplomatic defeat Russia has recently sustained in Afghanistan, make it imperative for her to take steps for the recovery of her lost prestige. Over and above this is the fact, long recognized by the Russians, that the establishment of British influence throughout Afghanistan makes their own position in Trans-Oxiana quite untenable, unless some means can be provided for connecting her Turkestan base with the Caspian, and her attention is therefore directed to the opening out of the Charjoi, Merv, and Atrek line of communication.

3. As a matter of ordinary policy to check a rival's plans for counteracting the evil effects of a diplomatic rebuff, it would be advisable to do all in one's power to thwart him, but apart from this the presence of the Russians at Merv would so seriously affect British interests in Afghanistan that it is difficult to say to what extent we should not go to prevent this taking place.

4. The complications likely to arise from such close proximity of the Russians to the Afghan frontier are too apparent to need any lengthy remarks on this subject. At the present time, owing to the unsettled state of his kingdom, the Amir of Kabul's authority in Afghan-Turkestan is exceptionally weak, more especially in the Uzbek States on the western border, so that Russian Agents at Merv would find a ripe field for intrigue amongst the people of Maimena, Andkhai, and other only partially subjugated dependencies of Afghanistan.

5. The Tékés when driven out of Merv would seek an asylum in Badghis and the valley of the Upper Murghab, where there are permanent Turkoman settlers who pay revenue to the Afghan Governor at Herat. Even if the question of frontier between Afghanistan and Turkomania did not become the subject of discussion with Russia, a heavy responsibility would be laid upon our ally the Amir to restrain the acts of the refugees, and pretexts would be forthcoming for asserting that the enemies of Russia were making use of Afghan territory as a "*point d'appui*" from which to prosecute their struggle with their conquerors.

6. Unless by a distinct announcement to Russia that England would consider her interests in Afghanistan affected by a Russian occupation of Merv, it is difficult to suggest a means for preventing or forestalling such occupation without ultimately becoming involved in complications with that Power.

7. Russian officials appear to have stated that an advance to Merv is beyond the scope of Lazareff's expedition, and that the object in view is the chastisement of the Akhal-Tékés. The settlements of this division of the Turkoman tribe lie between Burma and Gavers on the skirts of the Kopet Dagh. Gavers is about 200 miles, or, according to Russian accounts, 15 marches from Merv. Although belonging to the same main division of the Turkomans, the Akhal Tékés and the Merv Tékés have, I am informed, quite distinct interests, and the large extent of country the Tékés occupy supports a belief that this is actually the case. It is possible that the Russians

have no just cause of complaint against the Merv Tékés, though for purposes of their own they may find it convenient to include them in the generic term of Téké-Turkomans, and deal with them accordingly. Of course, after the Akhals are driven within Merv limits the Tékés of that quarter will soon be saddled with a responsibility they will not be able to fulfil to the satisfaction of their powerful neighbours, and a plausible pretext for coercing them will easily be found. But as the facts are at present there are grounds for disputing Russia's right to advance to Merv.

8. If direct interference by England is not at present considered expedient, an alternative means of obstructing Russia's designs might be found practicable through negotiations with Afghanistan or Persia, for one or other of these States to assume a protectorate over Merv.

9. The natural solution of the Merv question would be to forestall a Russian occupation by incorporating that part of the Téké-Turkoman country with Afghanistan, an arrangement that would meet with the ready consent of the tribes concerned; who at present dread the advance of Russia, and are looking all round for some State on whose protection to cast themselves. The Téké Chief, the late Koushid Khan, made more than one appeal to the Amir Shere Ali Khan, and his successor Nur Verdi Khan appears equally desirous to obtain Afghan protection. Failing to obtain assistance from their co-religionists in Afghanistan, and preferring an alliance with their Shiah enemies to falling under Russian subjection, the Turkomans would gladly seek protection from Persia.

10. Assuming it to be undesirable to become involved in complications with Russia on the Turkoman question, there are many serious objections to an Afghan protectorate of Merv, the responsibilities connected with which we should ultimately have to share, and in a locality inconveniently distant from our resources. Moreover, the disorganized condition of Afghanistan, the result of several years of misrule and oppression by the late Shere Ali Khan, will for some time to come afford the present Amir sufficient employment at home to make it undesirable for him to engage in affairs beyond his frontier, and undertake obligations not easy to fulfil.

11. It is only natural that the Amir of Afghanistan should view with jealousy the extension of the Persian frontier to Merv, but I think that he can be convinced that at the present time it would be easier for the Shah of Persia to impede the advance of Russia than for him to do so, and that, under all circumstances, it is preferable, in the interests of Afghanistan, that a Persian protectorate should be established, rather than that Merv should be absorbed by the more formidable Power.

12. To prevent the annexation of Merv by the Russians is of nearly as much vital importance to Persia as it is to the Turkomans. Once established at Merv and thus completely overshadowing the whole of Northern Persia, an excuse would speedily be found by Russia for occupying Astrabad and Shahrud, positions which, aided by the sterility of the deserts to the south, virtually detach Eastern from Western Persia, and the spoliation commenced at Turkmanchai would rapidly be completed.

13. As the Russians will have nearly 400 miles of country to traverse before reaching the extreme eastern limits of the Akhal tribe, it is certain that Persia can seriously impede, if not entirely thwart, the object of the Russian Expeditionary Force, by secretly or openly restricting the supply of provisions from the Khorassan districts, and to induce Persia to take this step is possibly the best means just now at our command. The occupation of Kariz may be found sufficient for all purposes of coercion as regards the Akhal Tékés, and if seriously hampered through having to transport all their requirements from the Caspian, the Russians may find it convenient to proceed no further and make that place a base for future operations eastward at a more opportune season.

14. If the possession of Merv is of any real advantage to Persia, she may consider the proposal to obstruct Russia a fitting opportunity for pressing England to recognize such an acquisition of territory. But, in granting such recognition, it should not be lost sight of that by the Treaty of Turkmanchai Russia has the right to place Consular Agents in any part of Persian territory, so that, unless Persia were prepared to repudiate her engagements in this respect, the presence of a Russian Agent so close

to the Afghan frontier might be found to be productive of nearly as much evil as if the Russians were themselves in possession of the same position.

15. Since the decline of British and the increase of Russian influence in Persia, it has generally been considered that any progress on the part of Persia towards the Afghan frontier is tantamount to the advance of Russia, so that unless self-interest, or substantial guarantees for good faith, tend to keep Persia to whatever assurances she may make us, there must necessarily be much anxiety as to whether the extension of the Persian frontier in a direction where it is our interest to exclude Russian influence, would prove to be an advantage or the very contrary.

16. The numerical strength of the Téké Turkomans and their natural daring render it probable that if aided with arms and money they could offer a protracted resistance, which even the Russian forces now collected, spread over as they will be along an extended line of communication, would not easily overcome. The Russian press has asserted that good firearms have reached the Tékés across the Herat frontier, and whether this be true or false, it suggests a means of indirectly assisting the Turkomans if it were considered advisable to do so.

17. In conclusion, I must state that information at Kabul is most defective as regards Turkoman affairs, even amongst Afghan officials who have served on the Herat frontier. I have therefore only been able to record my personal opinion formed after study of such works and official documents as bear on the subject. This fact alone would make one hesitate before encouraging direct interference by the Afghan Government in a matter regarding which it is completely ignorant.

APPENDIX D.

Question of Persian Supplies to the Russian Akhal Expedition.

Perhaps the most convenient form of recording this question is to quote from a Note submitted on the subject by the Political Secretary to the Secretary of State, dated 16th June 1880, which ran as follows:—

The general history of this question may be gathered from Mr. Thomson's letter to Lord Salisbury of 28th November 1879, No. 288, which says:

“ I have observed that the Russian newspapers express great dissatisfaction at the action of the Persian Government in withholding supplies, transport, and other assistance from the Akhal expedition, and that they attribute its failure to this cause. They at the same time complain that this action on the part of Persia is due to English ‘intrigue’ at Teheran.

“ A short statement of the circumstances on these points in connection with this and the last expedition may not be uninteresting to your Lordship. It has been pronounced as certain by a distinguished authority that the success of the Russian advance from the Caspian to Merv depends entirely upon the attitude of Persia. That with her assistance success was sure, that without it it would be doubtful, and that her opposition would render it impossible.

“ Last year (1878) Captain Napier informed me from Khorassan that the resources of that province were being placed at the disposal of the commander of the Russian force, that instructions had been issued by the Prince Governor to the Persian frontier chiefs to collect provisions and furnish supplies and carriage to the Russian troops, and that it was moreover intended to co-operate actively with them by cutting off the retreat of the Akhal tribes. Immediately, therefore, on the Shah's return from Europe, after having remonstrated with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the subject, I requested an audience of the Shah, and pointed out to His Majesty the avowedly hostile intention towards England with which the expedition was undertaken, obtained from him peremptory orders that no assistance of any kind should be afforded.

“ The expedition advanced, counting on Persian supplies. These were not forthcoming, and it consequently failed, without having encountered any enemy save disease and starvation. The Russian Minister here then complained to the Minister

“ for Foreign affairs that it was owing to his intrigue ‘ that they had been so *indigne-ment trompés*,” and demanded an audience of the Shah to complain of the course followed by His Highness in this matter, a course which was in reality that ordered by His Majesty himself.

“ In view of the certainty of the Russians renewing their attack this year, and of their taking measures beforehand to ensure, if possible, Persia’s giving them aid and supplies, I did not cease to urge on the Persian Government the unfriendly character of such a proceeding—but failing for a length of time to elicit any satisfactory assurance on this head. The threats which the Russian Minister had on more than one occasion used both as regards Persia and the possible consequences to himself personally of withholding provisions had not been without effect, and the Persian Government appeared to me and to others to have made up their minds to yield to Russian pressure. It was actually reported to me by my Turkish colleague that the Minister for Foreign Affairs had told him that it would be impossible for them this year to do otherwise—a remark, to the justice of which His Excellency, as he informed me, assented. The expedition was advancing, and matters looked serious. I heard that the Governor of Bujnurd had already collected a large store of grain, and that Russian agents were there for the purpose of making further purchases with the co-operation of the Persian authorities. I accordingly sought an interview with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and warned him that the time would come when the present show of friendship on the part of Russia would change, that Persia would then have need of a friend, and that on the course which she now followed would possibly depend the action which England, who alone could help her in her hour of need, would then adopt. The effect of this representation was that, while alleging that it was under treaty impossible for him openly to withhold permission for the sale of transport and provisions to the Russians, he promised that secret measures should be adopted by which that sale should be prevented. This engagement he has faithfully adhered to, with the consequence, as the Russian newspapers, and their officials military and civil, assert, of the disastrous failure of the expedition.

“ The refusal of Persia to supply transport and provisions to the Russian force is in striking contrast with the readiness with which she acceded to the request made by me shortly afterwards for permission to purchase the mules required for the English transport service in Afghanistan, and I cannot but think that the Persian Government deserve credit for the result that has been obtained by that refusal. That result has been one of great importance to Her Majesty’s Government. Had the Russian expedition succeeded last year, which, I believe, it would have done had it had the full assistance then contemplated by Persia, and had a Russian force been thus established either at Merv, or elsewhere, giving access to the Herat frontier, the whole of Afghanistan would have been in a ferment, and the difficulty of our negotiations with that country would have been enormously increased. Were a Russian force on the frontier at this moment the extent of the embarrassment it would cause us can scarcely be estimated.”

Mr. Thomson all along attached great importance to the withholding of supplies on the part of the Persian Government to the Russian expeditionary force invading Akhal. And, no doubt, rightly so. For on this point, Captain Napier, who is no mean authority, says in his latest report:—“ The existing transport on the Caspian consists of 20 line steamers, of which 17 are now afloat, four private trading steamers, and eight war sloops, all of an average carrying capacity of 350 men.

“ A force of 20,000 men might, by these existing means, be landed at Chikislar in three months. If Persia should be found willing to give supplies freely, a force of 10,000 men might be placed within reach of Herat in about six months. If she were forced to maintain an attitude of neutrality, and the sale of grain were thus restricted, from 9 to 12 months would, at least, be required. The ultimate maintenance of an occupying force would, beyond its cost, offer no difficulty, for the northern districts of Khorassan alone produce enough to feed a force of 20,000 to 25,000 men, in ordinary years.”

At the same time Captain Napier acknowledges that the refusal on the part of Persia to afford supplies to a Russian invading force would hardly stop it, although it might check and add greatly to the cost of a Russian advance.

His remarks on the question of supplies, as it affected the Russian expedition of

1878, are so interesting that I make no apology for quoting them *in extenso*. He says :—“ *The question of supplies*. It was reported at Meshed at the time of the “retreat that it was caused by great sickness in the ranks, and failure of supplies. I “was never able to trace the report to any reliable source, but the question being an “important one I was most careful to make inquiries both on the border and on the “coast during my return journey. Regarding the amount of sickness, I obtained “actual figures from a thoroughly reliable source, which I have already given. In “the matter of supplies, the Persian Government having made some capital out of its “alleged refusal to comply with Lomakin’s requisitions, it may be useful, with a view “to throw light both on its actions, and on the true objects of the expedition, for me “to give detail the various items of information I received.

“In July, when on the border, I learnt that the three border Chiefs, Bujnurd, “Kuchan, and Deregez, had been ordered to give supplies, when required, to the “Russian force. The only one of the three in a position to do anything was the “Bujnurd Chief, who, on receipt of a requisition from Consul Bakouline, backed by “an order from the Governor of Khorassan, appointed one of his officers, Begler, “chief of the cavalry of Simulghan, to superintend the arrangements for the trans- “port of regular convoys of corn to Karee-kala. Karee-kala was the point fixed upon “by the Chief, in concert with Lomakin’s interpreter, who was sent to Bujnurd with “some Yamut Turkomans, bearing, I was informed, an order sealed by the Shah to “facilitate the purchase of supplies. When riding through Simulghan I was accom- “panied by Begler, who told me that when he was on the point of starting for Karee- “kala, with a convoy of grain, escorted by 500 Bujnurd horsemen, he was ordered by “the Eelkhani to remain, and the villagers were told that they might sell corn to the “Russians, if they wished, at their own risk, which was tantamount to a prohibition “of export at least to so exposed a point as Karee-kala.

“From the Eelkhani himself I learnt what action had been taken by the Persian “Government in the matter. He spoke to me very unreservedly, and I have every “reason to believe honestly, and, as his disclosures would possibly compromise him “with his Government, I would ask that this paragraph may be suppressed in any “document likely to pass into the hands of any Persian official.

“In explanation of the Chief’s action in the matter, and of his relations with me, “I may say that all three of the border Chiefs are guided by the same interests in “their dealings with the Turkomans, and their views regarding them. The *status quo* “is what they desire. They are averse equally to any settlement of the question by “their own Government and by the Russians. Thence arose their opposition to my “movements so long as they had any reason to fear them, and the action of the “Eelkhani in the present instance. On receipt of the order to give supplies, which “clearly came only from the local government, the Eelkhani sent off an express to the “telegraph station at Sabzwar, and asked for instructions from the Foreign Minister, “who has charge of the government of Khorassan. The reply was to allow grain to “go to the Russian camp if it could be done secretly. This, he explained, was impos- “sible, for no convoy would go without a large guard. Then followed an order in “writing from Teheran, directing him to give no supplies, but to allow his people to “sell whenever he could do so.

“In the Chief’s opinion, the authorities at Teheran had acted loyally towards us “(he had consequently the less hesitation in telling me), but it is probable that they “have given a different account of their action. In any case, under the orders he “held, the Russian General might have obtained any quantity of corn he wanted by “sending a guard to Bujnurd, or even as far only as the Karai plateau, and this the “Chief admitted. As a fact, no grain was sold to the force by any of the Bujnurd “people. Some few loads were taken down the Atrek by a road then safe to the camp “at Chat, but could not be sold remuneratively.

“While passing through the chiefship, I made frequent inquiries in the villages and “on the high roads, and heard always the same story, that supplies had been pro- “mised to the Russians, and that many were prepared to sell, and glad to do so, “having had a good harvest, but that the Eelkhani refused at the last moment to give “guards. From the Akhal Turkomans I met in Bujnurd I heard that the Russians “had purchased some bread and flour from their people of the lower ‘obahs,’ but “were chiefly supplied by caravans from their rear. In the Goklan ‘obahs’ I learnt “that the force had been supplied with flour, sheep, and cattle by the Sheikhs, a

“ section of Turkomans found amongst the Goklans and Yamuts, who have a free
 “ right of passage in even the most troubled times. It is improbable that any of
 “ these went as far as the Téké frontier, but they are in a position to deliver large
 “ quantities of supplies to the camp at Chat. From Russian sources I learnt that the
 “ force was nearly independent of supplies from the country, and was never in want
 “ of food. My informants were the principal medical officer, the commandant of
 “ artillery, and the Turkoman interpreter of the force, who had all three left it on its
 “ dispersal into winter quarters. It was after this, and after the return of Lomakin
 “ to the Caucasus, that there occurred the complete breakdown in the commissariat
 “ arrangements that gave colour to the previous reports of the disorganized condition
 “ of the force.

“ The conclusion that I arrived at, therefore, is that the expeditionary force never
 “ was actually short of supplies, and never really needed any assistance from Persia,
 “ but at the same time it is equally clear that no further advance could have been made
 “ without such aid, or the expenditure of a far larger sum than appears to have been
 “ allotted for the purpose. The force would have found itself at Bami only at the
 “ commencement of its difficulties. Up to that point the lines of communication were
 “ tolerably secure, and there had been no actual outbreak of hostilities with the
 “ Turkomans. Every stage in advance would
 “ have brought fresh difficulties, and there can be
 “ no doubt that it was this consideration, as well
 “ as a persistent desire to compel Persia to accept
 “ a solution of the Turkoman question in a
 “ Russian sense, that led to her assistance being
 “ invoked.*

* All the Russian officials concerned were
 much annoyed at the refusal of Persia to
 send (not sell) supplies to the camp, and
 thereby to commit herself thoroughly, and no
 doubt preferred to attribute the retreat to her
 defection.

(Signed) G. NAPIER.

“ *True cause of retreat.*—The cause of the retreat from Band-i-Hassan being
 “ neither want of supplies nor sickness in the camp, as I believe, remains open to
 “ conjecture. The opinion I have come to is that it was due to, or in pursuance of,
 “ orders received by Lomakin when halting at Band-i-Hassan. In support of this I
 “ may mention, for what it is worth, the following incident. While conversing with
 “ the Bujnurd Chiefs and some Turkomans, one of his followers, who had lately been
 “ in the Russian camp, was introduced, and told to relate, for my benefit, what he
 “ had seen of the condition of the force. In the course of his report I caught a
 “ casual expression referring to the receipt of letters by Lomakin, and, on inquiry,
 “ was informed that the day previous to the retreat, which took place at daybreak of
 “ the fifth day of the halt, letters had been received which it soon became known were
 “ orders for the return of the force. Previous to this, the Chief had been himself at a
 “ loss to account for so sudden a retreat, and he at once suggested that there had been
 “ a change of plans at St. Petersburg, which he, not unnaturally, attributed to the
 “ action of our Government. His Turkoman guests left fully impressed with the belief
 “ that we had interposed in their favour, an impression that it would have been useless
 “ for me to attempt to remove.”

The question dragged on from 1878 till now. The representations made by
 Mr. Thomson to the Shah on the danger to Persia of a Russian invasion of the Akhal
 country were earnest and frequent, so much so as at one time to have somewhat
 irritated His Majesty, whose attitude at the same time on the question of withholding
 supplies showed symptoms of wavering. Mr. Thomson's utterances on this subject
 contained in his Despatch of 15th April 1880 are as follows:—

“ The furnishing of such supplies to the small Russian camps at Chat and
 “ Chikislar will affect but slightly the prospects of the expedition now about to be
 “ despatched against the Tékés. But the success of the campaign will greatly depend
 “ upon the arrangements which may be made for providing transport and supplies
 “ when the force advances into the *interior*. A certain number of camels will then be
 “ furnished by the Persian Turkomans, whether the Shah desires it or not, but the
 “ number procurable amongst these tribes is limited and altogether inadequate for the
 “ requirements of the force engaged. The Russians will therefore, no doubt, again
 “ endeavour to obtain the co-operation of the Persian Government, and if they can
 “ arrange for camel transport being freely given from this country and for the
 “ abundant supplies obtainable in Khorassan being made available for the expedition
 “ when it reaches the frontier districts of that province, the subjugation of the Akhal

“Turkomans will probably be the result of this third invasion of their territory. Should such material aid not be obtained from Persia, the Russians will have to encounter the same difficulties this year, which they were unable to contend with in the two preceding years, and the occupation of Akhal may prove to be a task as difficult of achievement now as then.”

From the following Despatches from Lord Salisbury to Mr. Thomson, it will be observed that the late Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs approved entirely of Mr. Thomson's action in the matter of these supplies:—

No. 41, dated 17th April 1879.

“I have received your telegram of this day's date, reporting the statement made to you by the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs that the Persian Government will do all in their power to prevent the occupation of Akhal by the Russians, that they will remonstrate against any interference with the Karce-kala districts, and that orders have been, or will be, sent to prevent the supply of provisions to the expedition which is being organized from the shores of the Caspian.

“I have, in reply, requested you to express the gratification with which these assurances have been received by Her Majesty's Government.”

No. 45, dated 7th May 1879.

“I have received your Despatches, Nos. 47, 48, and 52, of the 1st, 2nd, and 6th of March, reporting your conversations with the Sepeh Salar on the policy of Persia towards England and Russia, and your endeavours to obtain from His Highness an assurance that supplies should not be furnished from the Persian provinces to the projected Russian expedition into Akhal.

“Your language on the subject has the full approval of Her Majesty's Government.”

No. 60, dated 30th June 1879.

“I have to acknowledge the receipt of your Despatch, No. 111, of the 30th April last, reporting the substance of a conversation you had had with the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs upon the assistance rendered by the local Persian authorities to the military expedition of General Lazareff, and upon the encroachments of Russia in Central Asia.

“I have now to state, in reply, that I entirely approve the observations you addressed to His Excellency on the occasion in question.”

No. 87, dated 30th August 1879.

“I have received your Despatch, No. 162, of the 12th ultimo, and I have to inform you that I approve of the representation you have made to the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs with reference to mules and provisions reported by the British Agents at Meshed and Astrabad, to have been furnished to the Russian expedition against the Turkoman tribes of Akhal.

“I likewise approve of the instructions you have given to the Meshed Agent to communicate to the principal Chiefs of Akhal the nature of the redress afforded for the misconduct of the Deregez Chief towards Captain Napier.”

No. 4, dated 12th January 1880.

“I have read, with interest, your Despatch giving a summary of what has occurred in regard to the supply of provisions and transport from Persia to the recent Russian expedition against the Akhal Turkomans, and of the results that have ensued from this assistance having been withheld by the Persian authorities.

“I take this opportunity of again expressing to you the acknowledgments of Her Majesty's Government for your able and careful management of this important matter. You are authorized to inform the Shah and his Ministers that Her Majesty's Government, while they believe the course that has been followed to be in consonance with the real interests of Persia, are fully sensible that it has been adopted in a spirit of friendship to England and in accordance with your advice.”

It can scarcely be regarded as doubtful, but that facilities given by the Shah for the Russian expedition against the Akhals will be, in fact, facilities for eventual Russian aggression on the northern provinces of Persia, involving the British Government in serious complications as to the preservation of the integrity of the latter State. While on the one hand, therefore, Persia cannot be expected actively to oppose the Russian movement, she should, it is submitted, in her own interests and those of the British Government be encouraged to adhere to her oft-declared policy of withholding *assistance* from it, whether direct or indirect, and thereby retard as much as possible the Russian approach to Merv, which, whenever it occurs, may lead to serious consequences in Northern Persia and Herat.

1880.

On the resumption this year of hostilities with the Turkomans and the appointment of General Scobelev to the command of the expeditionary force, the Russian Minister at Teheran called upon the Shah's Government to issue orders to the Governors of Bujnurd and Kuchan to afford friendly aid and to facilitate the purchase by Russian agents of any supplies that might be required from their districts, whereupon the Persian Minister in London was instructed to ascertain the views of Her Majesty's Government on the subject. The result will be gathered from the following extract from a Despatch from Lord Granville to the Earl of Dufferin, No. 310, dated 8th July 1880:—

“A short time ago the Persian Minister at this Court stated to me that, at the instance of Her Majesty's late Government, the Persian authorities had thrown difficulties in the way of supplies being furnished to the Russian expedition, and he inquired on behalf of the Shah's Government what attitude Her Majesty's present advisers would wish the Persian Government to observe in this matter. I told Malcom Khan that the advice of the Queen's Government was that Persia should do nothing which, in the opinion of the Shah's Government, would weaken her position or diminish her independence, but that Her Majesty's Government had no wish to press Persia to do anything merely out of hostility to Russia.”

The latest information in our possession as to the attitude of the Shah's Government on the subject of furnishing supplies to the Russian force is as follows:—At an interview between the Shah and Her Britannic Majesty's Minister (reported in Mr. Thomson's Despatch, No. 222, dated 30th September 1880) His Majesty stated that “M. Zinoviev had lately again urgently applied to the Persian Government for permission to purchase supplies in Khorassan for the use of the Russian troops in Akhal, and he had been informed that the inhabitants of that province were at liberty to sell any surplus provisions and grain which they had in excess of what was required for their own consumption and for next year's seed.”

The Meshed Agent, reporting on the 11th September 1880 (Enclosure in Mr. Thomson's Despatch, No. 219, dated 25th September 1880) observes:—“So far as I can discover there has been no formal arrangement between the Russians and the Persian Government, but the Governor of Bujnurd has caused the inhabitants to understand that, far from his being displeased at their taking provisions to the Russians, they will profit by it themselves; thus, in truth, they will be doing rather a better service than if they were obliged to apply to the Persian Government for authority. I think that it is not improbable that this is being done with the permission of the Central Government.” In a later report of the 16th October, Abbass Khan states that purchases of grain to the extent of 1,000 kharwars (kharwar=67½ lbs.) had been effected in the city of Meshed alone.

In the Bujnurd district, subsequent to the practical removal of the prohibition on the export of grain, purchases by Russian agents have been carried on on a large scale. Colonel Grodekoff, the well known traveller, has been deputed to visit the Eclkhani Yar Mahomed Khan, and has apparently gained over the latter to afford material aid in the matter of supplies for the expedition. In a letter from the Bujnurd correspondent, under date the 7th October, it is stated that “the greatest cordiality exists between him (Colonel Grodekoff) and the Governor. He has a royal firman ordering every one to attend to what he wants. His object is not yet made known,

“ but those who are friendly to him have sent out agents in every direction to pursue grain. There is a rumour that the Russians intend building a granary here.”

The following translation of a letter, dated September, from the Eelkhani to General Scobeleff (enclosure to letter from Mr. Thomson, 2nd November 1880) will serve to show the willingness of the Persian frontier authorities to furnish the Russian expedition with provisions and transport:—

“ As to the people of this district letting out their animals for hire and their opening a trade with the Russian camp, you had asked me to permit them to do so. As the greatest friendship and cordiality exists between the two Governments and also between your Excellency and myself, I have given the said permission, and have issued stringent orders to all the traders and owners of animals for hire that they are to trade in the Russian camp and hire out their animals. It is evident that I will not delay in carrying out all orders you may have, and that I will exert myself in fulfilling your wishes. Please inform me of all you want done.”

From the above it seems clear that want of supplies will not hamper the movements of General Scobeleff's force, should the efforts of the Russian agents, as appears probable, succeed in tapping the resources of Khorassan, which we are told by Captain Napier (quoted above) are sufficient in ordinary years to feed a force of 25,000 men. With this difficulty removed it cannot be doubted that the subjugation of the Tékés will inevitably follow.

The attitude of Persia on this subject is stated by Mr. O'Donovan, the special correspondent of the “ Daily News,”* to be as follows:—

“ Throughout all this affair Persia maintains with regard to Russia what may be termed a benevolent neutrality—a very benevolent one. Among the people and officials along this frontier the feeling is altogether a pro-Russian one, and they hail with delight the probability of having the Russians ere long as neighbours instead of their former troublesome ones. This is scarcely to be wondered at; but I think that in the purely official classes the feeling in favour of Russia is not altogether to be traced to the pleasure of seeing them take the place of the Tékés. The number of articles of Russian manufacture—articles of luxury of great value—show that in frontier relations the Russians have not been forgetful of those little social amenities in the shape of presents so conducive to a mutual good feeling. This is a universal Russian custom under similar circumstances, and in this case seems to have thoroughly attained its object. In fact, it seems to me that the Russian officials charged with conducting frontier policy in this part of the world thoroughly understand their mission, and that in Central Asia the Russian Government has the game all in its own hands. So ‘ benevolent ’ is Persia's neutrality that, as far as she is concerned, Russia may do pretty much what she pleases along the frontier in dealing with the Tékés, and meets with every facility she may stand in need of in so doing. In a letter which I wrote from Teheran some time ago, I made mention of an interview which I had the honour of having with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, during which some remarks were made about the Russo-Téké question. I asked His Highness whether it was intended altogether to abandon the Akhal-Tékés during the impending struggle. ‘ Not exactly,’ he replied. ‘ We shall, of course, always do what we can in the matter.’ That, however, seems to be, up to the present, absolutely nothing. I am much inclined to believe what I have on more than one occasion heard hinted at, that in all this Akhal-Téké and Merv affair there is a secret thorough understanding between the Russian and Persian Governments, and the understanding may possibly go much further than the annihilation of a handful of border barbarians.”

* “ Daily News,” 23rd October 1880.

APPENDIX E.

Russian Expedition to the Oxus.

Russian Abstract, No. LXVI., 1879.

The "Turkestan Gazette," No. 32, 14th (26th) August, announced the arrival at Samarcand of all the members of the expedition instructed to trace a line of rail through Central Asia, and to inquire into the navigability of the upper Oxus waters. Count Rostoftsof, with Messrs. Lipunof (engineer), Professors Sorokin and Mushketof, and the photographer, Karazin, with two telegraphists, proceeded first to Karshi to see the Amir of Bokhara. The other members of the expedition, Messrs. Sokolofski (engineer), Suisakof (photographer), Lieutenant-Colonel Maef, Messrs. Lunkevitch and Kreitchmer, Dr. Valitski, and Mr. Pelman (zoologist), with the head of the expedition, proceeded by way of Kitab, Shahr-i-Sabz, Yar-tiubé, and Kalta-Minár to Derbend, where the two parties will unite.

Mr. Maef will detach himself at Derbend to survey the Surkhan, Kafirnihan, and Vaksh, affluents of the Oxus. He proposes to drift down the Surkhan on a raft from Sarydjuí to Termez ruins, to pass over to the Kobadian (lower course of the Kafirnihan), and to ascend that river to Hissar. Mr. Maef will then pass over the mountains to Norak and into the Vaksh basin. The Vaksh is not navigable above Norak; at Puli-Kend it issues through a cleft 10 or 15 feet wide, and is a roaring torrent. From Norak Mr. Maef will float down to Kurgan-tiubé (ancient Khotl), and may then pass down (the Oxus) to Charjoi if he fall in with the other members of the expedition. Otherwise he will return to Kilif, Shahr-i-Sabz, and Samarcand.

Mr. Suisakof will pass through Bokhara and Karakul to Charjoi, and descend the Oxus from there with the others.

The rest of the expedition will pass by Denaú, Yurchi, Sarydjuí, Regar, Dushambé, and Baldjuan, to Kulab, and thence to the Pandj river. At Hazret Imam the expedition will be joined by Captain Zubof, who will ascend the Oxus from Petro-Alexandrofsk to Kobadian. On the 25th July (O.S.) this officer was within 14 versts of Sherabad.

Russian Abstract, No. LXIII., 1879.

The "Golos," No. 277, 7th (19th) October, publishes the following intelligence from Orenburg:—

"You are doubtless aware of the fact that the scientific expedition engaged in the exploration of the Oxus had reached Charjoi. It is now reported from Samarcand that one of the parties had been attacked by Téké Turkomans. About 100 Turkomans fell upon our countrymen, who, as well as the Cossacks, did not, however, lose their presence of mind, and, profiting by the inequalities of the ground, opened a strong fire upon them. The Tékés did not stand this, and turned to flight. It is said that they were armed with good rifles, but that they did not know how to use them. The Afghans, on the other hand, received the Russian party in a friendly spirit, offering their hospitality, but the members of the expedition would not receive it, *being desirous of giving no handle to the suspicion of Russian relations with the Afghans*. The entire course of the Oxus, so far as it has been explored, is found to be navigable."

The "Moscow Gazette," No. 255, 8th (20th) October, publishes the following telegram from Katta-Kurghan, dated 7th (19th) October:—

"The expedition sent to explore the Oxus separated into two parties at Termez."

Messrs. Mushketof, Sorokin, Karazin, and Sokolofski descended the river to Petro-Alexandrofsk, the other members crossed the Surkhan river and the Kafirnihan at Kobadian, and reached the Vaksh river at the village of Sikhman, from whence they passed down in boats to Petro-Alexandrofsk. The navigability of the Surkhan, Kafirnihan, and Vaksh rivers are now ascertained, as is also the gold bearing properties of the latter. A route survey was made as far as the Vaksh, and compasses

were used in surveying the locality of the confluence of the Vaksh and Pandj rivers and the banks of the river at Kilif and Kerki; determinations were made of Kobadian, the confluence of the Vaksh and Pandj, of Termez, Kilif, Kerki, and Charjoi. Kishlak, ruins, and ferries on the above-named rivers have been allocated on the map. A collection was also made of the local traditions; the members of the expedition at the same time gathered information respecting the dry river bed from Kilif to the Uzboi, which one of the members traced for a length of 15 versts to Denaú. A quantity of geographical data and of zoological specimens were obtained. Mr. Zubof reached the extreme navigable point of the Pandj, he also ascertained the fall of the Oxus to Charjoi, and made a superficial survey of that river upwards to Khodja-Saleh. Thus the expedition has passed up the entire course of the Oxus, and 70 versts up its affluents, the Vaksh and Pandj rivers.

“Standard,” 25th November 1880. From our own correspondent, Rome, Wednesday night:—

“I learn from private sources that the following queries, proceeding from the Austrian commander of the Persian troops now engaged against the rebels, are attracting much attention, and being earnestly canvassed in Vienna:—1. Which are the possible points on which the two lines from Turkestan and the Caspian into (the) Maimena may be directed? 2. Has the Russian central staff a well studied plan of these two lines, and is such plan based upon a thorough knowledge of the geographical and topographical specialities of the localities? 3. What is the proper point for Kaufmann to pass into Bokhara from Samarcand, and is the Waehach (Vaksh) Surkh-ab valley, from Kurgan-tiube down to the Oxus, to be the basis of operation of the left wing of the Turkestan army? 4. Is the right bank of the Amu Daria, from the delta of the said river down to Kerki, a favourable base for establishing an aggressive front towards Balkh and (the) Maimena? 5. Is the Russian staff acting upon the geometrical scale as given by the latest corrections of Universal Meridian, or have they a scale of their own? 6. What is the true distance from Kysyldebad (Kizil-Arvat) to Sarakhs, and from Karshi (Bokhara) to (the) Maimena? 7. The Yamut Turkomans now acting as allies of the Russians, is it likely that the Téké Turkomans may also do the same, when the Russians shall be in a position of strategical importance on the plains of the Murghab?

“I am not without hope of being able to communicate to you shortly the replies to the above queries. My informant seemed to think that it was a matter of doubt and a point of much interest whether these questions were asked in a spirit and for purposes friendly or hostile to Russia.

“It is in any case interesting and important that the parties asking for this information should be desirous of obtaining it, and the questions themselves indicate clearly enough what, at least in the opinion of the Austrian officers in command of the Persian forces, is likely to be Russia’s ulterior object.”

“Standard,” 3rd December 1880. From our own correspondent, Rome, Thursday night:—

“The remarkable series of questions proceeding from the Austrian commander of the Persian troops now engaged against the rebels, and sent to Vienna for solution, will probably not yet have been forgotten, as they were printed in the ‘Standard’ so recently as the 25th of November. I told you, when sending them, that the subject was exciting very earnest attention in the highest military circles of that capital; and I am now able to send you the following summary of the considerations and ideas upon the subject, and upon its connection with matters of wider import, prevalent in those circles, not exclusive of the very highest and most authoritative personages.

“The condition of matters on Austria’s eastern frontier is held to be such that it is absolutely incumbent upon her to be ready to make use of all the resources at her command to the utmost. This opinion is universal. But the part which Austrian officers are taking in Persia leads to the question whether it is to the interest of Austria to seek to place Persia in such a position that she will have to be reckoned with as an active influence in the affairs of Asia Minor and Turkey. The fact is

“ that uncertainty is felt how far Persia can be included in any plan, unless accurate information can be obtained as to Russia’s views on Afghanistan and her relations with Ayub Khan. It is held to be clear that Austria, supported by Germany, has a great part to play in the Balkan district, and, above all, in Asia Minor. And it is felt that all that has been done by Austria since 1878 is but the commencement of a great epoch in the new shaping of her Eastern frontier; and it is perfectly well recognized that it is for her to achieve, with cautious vigilance and unceasing gradual advance, the conquest of all that the decay of the old world in the east makes Austria and Germany the heirs to. It is admitted that the part thus shadowed forth may surpass the means which Austria can command for its execution. And it is recognized that difficulties in Europe, involving with more or less probability European war, have first to be overcome. But, as regards the matters more immediately touched on by the questions sent from Persia, it is believed that, if there were time for the purpose, a good and competent Persian army might be formed. But it is doubted whether the march of events may not be too rapid to permit of such a task being accomplished. Yet, seeing what has already been done in Persia by Austrian commanders, the question is whether a Persian army, under Austrian officers, may not become, up to the Hindu Kush, so powerful an agent in all Russian and English troubles as to constitute Afghanistan a frontier State, dividing England from Russia, and leaving each of them to develop herself peaceably within her own frontiers.

“ But it is not hoped that any Persian army capable of effectuating such a programme can be provided at present; specially inasmuch as the slow but increasing advance of two very powerful Russian columns on (the) Maimena, and what is in Vienna held to be the irresolute and wavering attitude of the English in the south-east of Afghanistan, give no prospect of any such success.

“ It is, however, considered that a very different prospect might be opened should that which is asserted at Vienna prove to be true, viz., that Ayub Khan purposed, with the support of Russia, to proceed to the conquest of the whole of Afghanistan. Because in that case England would be compelled to strain every nerve to render an alliance between Persia on the one part, and Ayub Khan and Russia on the other, impossible. It is anxiously asked, however, whether England can be depended upon to see this necessity for keeping Persia and Russia asunder, and restraining certain dynastic tendencies towards ideas of a resuscitated Caliph’s throne, which are known to exist in Persia. Is it, it is asked, understood in London that a single defeat of the British arms would make it a question no longer of Afghanistan, but of Beloochistan; that England would have to fight no longer for Kandahar, but for Khelat; no longer for the Helmund, but for the Gulf of Persia? The question whether it is to be thought that England will definitely be able to hold India is a matter of anxious consideration among those whose views and ideas are expressed in the above lines. And it is very strongly felt that, looking to all the concentration of force on the Maimena-Herat line provided for by Russian strategists, the English position on the Helmund will be untenable, if England neglects to make of Kandahar a first-class place of arms.

“ The paper of questions referred to above has excited the very greatest attention and interest in Vienna in all military circles, not excluding the very highest. Very full replies to those questions will shortly be sent. It is asserted that these replies will leave no doubt in the minds of the propounders of them as to the position of matters in Central Asia, and the results of the bait offered by Russia to Persia. I can inform you further that the paper of questions has, at suggestions from the highest quarters, been sent to Berlin, where it is exciting an extraordinary degree of interest. At Vienna they are awaiting the answers from Berlin, on which it is felt that very much may depend.”

APPENDIX F.

Persia’s claim to Merv, and her desire to be neutralized.

In a telegram* received in June 1879, Mr. Thomson reports having learnt that the

* Telegram from Mr. Ronald Thomson,
19th June 1879.

Shah had lately said that Persia had been asleep with reference to Russian designs on her frontier, that her time was sure to come, and that some measures should be taken in self-defence. The Kuchan Chief had been instructed to

assure the Akhal Chiefs of the good will of Persia, counselling active resistance, and deprecating submission; 20,000 tomans were ready for distribution among the tribes as an earnest of Persian sympathy. It was in contemplation also, Mr. Thomson believed, to address the Russian Legation a further note, stating "that Merv had always been claimed by Persia; that, some years ago, whilst asserting this right, she had lost an army, and undergone a disaster which had not yet been wiped out, and that she could not, under these circumstances, forego her claim to that territory."

In another telegraphic despatch, dated 23rd June 1879, Mr. Ronald Thomson reports that the Russian Minister at Teheran had, in a communication with the Persian Foreign Minister, used intimidating language, saying that, "whatever Persian action might be, the expedition would be carried out, but, if that action was unfriendly, she would repent it."

On the 9th of July,† the Persian Minister again assured Mr. Thomson that no

† Telegram, Mr. Ronald Thomson, 10th July.
Foreign Office to India Office, No. 523, 12th July 1879.

‡ There is some idea abroad that Afghanistan has some claim to Merv. She has none. She is bound not to go beyond the boundaries fixed in 1873. In years gone by, however, both Yakub Khan and his father have been on very friendly relations with the Turkomans. (See Captain Napier's Note on Merv, 22nd February 1875.)

In the Despatch, No. 21, 2nd July 1877, the Governor General of India wrote:—

"Were our relations with Afghanistan on a more satisfactory footing, the most natural and most efficient form which such action could assume would be arrangements with the Amir authorizing him to enter into friendly relations with the Téké Turkomans, and promising him our support in protecting them from Russian aggression if they choose to come under his rule. The Merv Tékés have for some time past courted the Afghan alliance, guided by a firm belief in the dependence of the latter country on England, which causes them to rely much on the aid they may obtain from it."

the title of Persia to Merv on the receipt of a written assurance that they would never consent to the occupation of that place by any other Power.

A reference on the subject was made§ to India, and a reply received from the

§ Telegram to Viceroy, 14th July. Reply, 16th July 1879.

Letter to Foreign Office, 17th July 1879.

See also Note on Persia, of 1st December 1879, pp. 92—102.

so far as the British Government is concerned. The latest information in our possession as to Merv, and the neutralization of Persia, is contained in the following Despatch from Mr. R. Thomson:—

No. 2.

No. 76, Secret. Enclosed in Foreign Office Letter of 15th June 1880.

My Lord,

Teheran, 1st April 1880.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's Despatch, No. 30, of the 12th February, with its enclosures, amongst which Nos. 13 and 14 are copies of despatches from Lord Odo Russell and Sir H. Elliot, dated the 16th January and the 4th February respectively, on the subject of a proposal made by the Shah to Germany and Austria for the neutralization of Persian territory.

I took an opportunity, during a conversation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday, to remark that I understood he had been in communication with the Austrian Minister here respecting a proposed neutralization of Persian territory in the event of a war between England and Russia, but that I had not heard with what result.

His Highness replied that he had been instructed by the Shah to make a communication on this subject to the Austrian and German Governments through Count Zaluski, the Austrian Envoy here, and that he had done so verbally some time ago.

The Shah's only object in taking this step, he explained, was to secure the Persian territory against Russian encroachment, and it had been his intention, as soon as he had ascertained in what light His Majesty's request was received at Vienna and Berlin, to communicate with Her Majesty's Government on the subject.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs went on to say that Persia had recently asserted claims to Merv, and had protested against any attempt by Russia to occupy that territory. The Shah had received assurances that the Emperor had no intention of interfering with Merv, but these assurances had only been given verbally, and it was with a view to obtain a more formal recognition of Persia's right to the Merv territory that His Majesty had made the present proposal to Austria and Germany.

With this object he had impressed upon Count Zaluski the importance to Persia of Merv being admitted and declared to be within the Shah's dominions, and the urgent necessity which also existed for the line of frontier to the north of Khorassan being clearly defined as passing from the Caspian at Hassan Kuli along the Atrek river to Chat, and including beyond that point the districts of Karee-Kala and Nokhor, as well as the lands south of the territory occupied by the Akhal Turkomans.

The Austrian Minister has, I am told, informed the Persian Government that he has received a telegram from his Government stating that the Shah's proposal was favourably entertained at Vienna, but that difficulties had been suggested at Berlin which might, however, eventually be overcome.

His Highness said that a despatch was expected shortly to reach Teheran giving further information on the subject, and, when it was communicated to him, he would inform me of its purport.

I have, &c.,
(Signed) RONALD F. THOMSON.

APPENDIX G.

The Russian Army in Central Asia.

The general war complement of the Russian Army is as follows:—

Infantry.

A company, in war time, consists of 200 men.
Five companies make a battalion of 1,000 men.
Three battalions make a regiment of 3,000 men.
Two regiments make a brigade of 6,000 men.
Two brigades make a division of 12,000 men.

Exception in the Caucasus:—

Four battalions make a regiment of 4,000 men.
Two regiments make a brigade of 8,000 men.
Two brigades make a division of 16,000 men.

On a peace footing, a company of infantry consists of 120 officers and men.

Cavalry.

A squadron consists of 128 men.
Two squadrons make a division of 256 men.
Four squadrons make a regiment of 512 men.
Two regiments make a brigade of 1,024 men.
Two brigades make a cavalry division of 2,048 men.

This is the effective strength of a cavalry division. In reality, five squadrons make a regiment, but, as one is always kept at the depôt as a reserve, the field strength is only four squadrons. The cavalry is always maintained on a war footing.

A Cossack sotnia consists of 120 men.
Six sotnias make a regiment of 720 men.

Artillery.

A battery consists of 8 guns.

Six batteries make a brigade of 48 guns.

A 4-pounder battery, on a war footing, comprises 255 officers and men, 151 horses, 16 ammunition carts, 2 baggage waggons, and 4 other waggons. A 9-pounder battery comprises 325 men and 206 horses. A brigade of 4-pounders has 1,530 men, and a brigade of 9-pounders 1,950 men.

An army corps comprises :—

Infantry, 25,000 men.

Cavalry, 3,000 men.

Artillery, 112 guns.

According to a report by Colonel Villiers of the strength of Russian troops in Turkestan, there appear to be the 1st, 4th, 7th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 14th, 15th, and 16th Battalions of the Line (about 10,000 men) at or near Kuldja, besides four battalions (about 4,000 men) at Tashkend, and three (3,000 men) at Samarkand.

Battalion at 1,000 (war footing).

Sotnia at 120.

Battery, 8 guns.

Of cavalry, there appears to be 20 sotnias of Cossacks (about 2,400 men) near Kuldja, five sotnias (about 600 men) in Tashkend, and five (600 men) in Samarkand.

Of the two brigades of artillery in Turkestan, two batteries (16 guns) are at Kuldja, two batteries (16 guns) at Vernöe, on their way to Kuldja, two batteries (16 guns) at Tashkend, and two batteries (16 guns) at Samarkand. Also six batteries (Gatlings), but location not known.

There is some difficulty in ascertaining the exact number of troops in the Akhal country, as Krasnovodsk forms part of the Caucasus command, and troops are thus sent across the Caspian without any notification of the change appearing in the Russian distribution return. The following return, based on the latest available information, shows the numerical strength of the Russian troops in Central Asia (exclusive of those under General Scobelev), and of the reserves in Siberia.

TURKESTAN.

Corps.	War Strength.				
	Combatants.	Non-Combatants.	Total Men.	Horses.	Guns.
Staff - - - - -	52	180	232	—	—
1 brigade of rifles (4 battalions) - - - - -	3,420	348	3,768	368	—
18 frontier battalions, including 1 attached W. Siberian -	18,864	1,620	20,484	1,800	—
9 regiments of Cossacks, including 4 Orenburg, 2 Siberian, 2 Semirechian, and 1 Ural - - - - -	8,442	569	9,011	9,437	—
2 brigades of field artillery, and 1 mountain horse battery - - - - -	1,986	447	2,433	1,865	64
2 Orenburg Cossack horse batteries - - - - -	398	56	454	536	12
1 battalion engineers - - - - -	1,030	95	1,125	130	—
1 reserve field battery - - - - -	179	38	217	185	8
1 instructional battery - - - - -	236	38	274	185	8
Total - - - - -	34,607	3,391	37,998	14,506	92
<i>In the Orenburg and Ural Districts.</i>					
2 frontier battalions - - - - -	2,054	162	2,216	180	—
8 reserve battalions - - - - -	8,040	576	8,616	280	—
13 regiments of Orenburg Cossacks - - - - -	12,207	858	13,065	13,676	—
8 regiments of Ural Cossacks - - - - -	7,512	528	8,040	8,416	—
6 Orenburg Cossack batteries - - - - -	1,362	180	1,542	1,686	36
Total - - - - -	31,175	2,304	33,479	24,238	36
Grand total - - - - -	65,782	5,695	71,477	38,744	*128

* There is also an Orenburg dépôt battery.

NOTE.—The above figures represent the field troops. There are no data for ascertaining the strength of the local detachments.

NOTE TO APPENDICES.
RECORD OF APPROXIMATE DISTANCES.

Caucasus, Caspian, &c.

	Miles.
Tiflis to Baku - - - - -	300
Tiflis to Tabriz - - - - -	360
Baku to Krasnovodsk - - - - -	185
Astrakhan to Krasnovodsk - - - - -	550
Petrovsk to Krasnovodsk - - - - -	370

Persia, &c.

Teheran to Astrabad - - - - -	270
Teheran to Bagdad - - - - -	500
Teheran to Resht - - - - -	211
Teheran to Meshed - - - - -	546
Teheran to Herat (<i>viâ</i> Meshed) - - - - -	761
Teheran to Merv (<i>viâ</i> Meshed) - - - - -	731
Meshed to Kuchan - - - - -	80
Meshed to Bujnurd - - - - -	144
Meshed to Merv - - - - -	185
Meshed to Herat - - - - -	215
Meshed to mouth of Atrek - - - - -	380
Meshed to Kelat-i-Nadir - - - - -	40

Turkistan.

Krasnovodsk to Kizil Arvat - - - - -	160
Kizil Arvat to Bami - - - - -	20
Kizil Arvat to Merv - - - - -	500
Michaelof to Bami - - - - -	185
Bami to Geuk Tepé - - - - -	78
Geuk Tepé to Askabad - - - - -	42
Askabad to Gavers - - - - -	16
Samarcand to Tashkend - - - - -	190
Samarkand to Karshi - - - - -	96
Samarcand to Kerki (Oxus) - - - - -	171
Samarcand to Maimena - - - - -	314
Samarcand to Herat (<i>viâ</i> Maimena) - - - - -	486
Samarcand to Balkh - - - - -	295
Samarcand to Bokhara - - - - -	260
Samarcand to Fyzabad - - - - -	103
Bokhara to Merv - - - - -	220
Bokhara to Khiva - - - - -	330
Bokhara to Balkh - - - - -	296
Bokhara to Maimena - - - - -	280
Merv to Meshed - - - - -	185
Merv to Kizil Arvat - - - - -	500
Merv to Teheran (<i>viâ</i> Meshed) - - - - -	731
Merv to Bokhara - - - - -	220
Merv to Herat - - - - -	230
Merv to Maimena - - - - -	230

Afghanistan, &c.

Kabul to Jellalabad - - - - -	104
Kabul to Peshawur - - - - -	192
Kabul to Ghazni - - - - -	85
Kabul to Kelat-i-Ghilzai - - - - -	229

	Miles.
Kabul to Kandahar	318
Kabul to Herat (<i>viâ</i> Kandahar)	687
Kabul to Herat (<i>viâ</i> Hazara country)	500
Kabul to Herat (<i>viâ</i> Maimena)	572
Kabul to Bamian Pass	107
Kabul to Balkh	357
Kabul to the Oxus	424
Kabul to Maimena	400
Kabul to Quetta (<i>viâ</i> Kandahar)	462
Kandahar to Quetta	143
Kandahar to Kelat	254
Kandahar to Jacobabad	343
Kandahar to Multan	450
Kandahar to Dera Ismail Khan	360
Kandahar to Dera Ismail Khan (<i>viâ</i> Quetta)	473
Kandahar to Sukkur	393
Kandahar to Kelat-i-Ghilzai	89
Kandahar to Ghazni	233
Kandahar to Kabul	318
Kandahar to Girishk	75
Kandahar to Furrah	236
Kandahar to Herat	369
Herat to Kandahar	369
Herat to Furrah	164
Herat to Girishk	294
Herat to Ghazni (<i>viâ</i> Kandahar)	602
Herat to Kabul (<i>viâ</i> Kandahar)	687
Herat to Kabul (<i>viâ</i> Hazara country)	500
Herat to Kabul (<i>viâ</i> Maimena)	572
Herat to Meshed	215
Herat to Teheran (<i>viâ</i> Meshed)	761
Herat to Merv	230
Herat to Maimena	172
Herat to Balkh	370
Herat to Khiva	780
Herat to Samarcand (<i>viâ</i> Maimena)	486
Maimena to Herat	172
Maimena to Merv	230
Maimena to Meshed	380
Maimena to Bokhara	280
Maimena to Samarcand	314
Maimena to Balkh	105
Maimena to Kabul	400
Balkh to Maimena	105
Balkh to Herat	370
Balkh to Kabul	357
Balkh to Oxus river	67
Balkh to Bokhara	296
Balkh to Samarcand	295

[NOTE.—The above distances are taken from Macgregor, Napier, and other authorities, who differ, however, in regard to some of them. Many of the distances noted are therefore only approximate.]

O. T. B.

India Office,
31st December 1880.