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OUR PUNJAB FRONTIER:

BEING

A CONCISE ACCOUNT OF THE VARIOUS TRIBES
BY WHICH THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

OF

BRITISH INDIA IS INHABITED;

SHEWING

ITS PRESENT UNPROTECTED AND UNSATISFACTORY STATE,

AND THE

URGENT NECESSITY THAT EXISTS FOR ITS IMMEDIATE
RECONSTRUCTION.

ALSO

BRIEF REMARKS ON AFGHANISTAN,

AND

OUR POLICY IN REFERENCE TO THAT COUNTRY.

BY

A PUNJAB OFFICIAL.

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E. M. LEWIS,
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INTRODUCTION.

HAVING served for several years in the Punjab, and having also, on a former occasion, travelled through the country of Afghanistan in an official capacity with the Political *Mission* to Candahar in 1858, I have the opportunity of being well acquainted with the present complicated state of affairs on our North-West Frontier. Seeing, in the approaches to India from the west, a field already prepared for the action of Russia,—a stage of which she will certainly be enticed unless we at once take the initiative,—and further being persuaded that danger does threaten the stability of our Indian Empire from that quarter, I am impelled to write the following brief remarks as the result of my observations, in the hope that, however feeble, they may assist in directing attention to this most important subject.

Believing that there can be no lasting confidence or tranquillity in this Province, or, indeed, any guarantee from internal commotion, or external invasion to the Indian Empire, until the Frontier is reconstructed, and a firm Afghan Government under British protection established at Cabul, it appears to me that the time has *now arrived* when we can no longer, with safety, afford to look on as passive spectators, but are bound, as the *guardians* to whom the well-being of the millions of India has been committed by a Divine Providence, to rouse up and endeavour to meet the difficulties that face us.

H. W. B.

PESHAWAR, }
1st September, 1868. }

THE FRONTIER.

ON our conquest of the Punjab in 1849, the Indus Provinces of Afghanistan came under British rule as a constituent part of the Sikh dominions. Under the Sikhs, however, this portion of their territories does not appear to have had any well-defined border. It would seem that they were content to limit their frontier to the line of villages at the foot of the hills, from which, in their annual Military promenades round the frontier, they were able to exact tribute, either directly, or through the local chiefs, whose authority these villages acknowledged.

Be this as it may, on annexation in 1849, we took over the Indus Provinces as the Sikhs had held them, and from that time to the present, excepting the annexation of the Miranzai valley in 1855, we have not altered or extended the border they gave us, despite the many provocations to do so that we have suffered during the past eighteen years.

Omitting the Cashmir territory, which was made over to Maharajah Gulab Sing, this border, which now forms the North-West Frontier of India, may be said to commence at the top of the Kaghan valley, adjoining the Chilas district. It skirts the range of the Black Mountain which separates Kaghan from the Indus, and then reaching that river follows its left bank to Torbela, where, crossing over, it runs along the base of the hills encircling the Peshawar valley as far as the Khybar Pass.

From this point the border is deflected back towards the Indus, and passing round the Afridi hills to Kohat, thence proceeds westward up the Miranzai valley, along the base of the Orakzai and Zwaemukht hills, to the river Kurram. Here it is again turned back, and passing round the Waziri hills, strikes the Takhti Suleman range, in the Dera Ismael Khan district. Onwards from this, following the base of the Suleman range, it proceeds due south, and joins the Sind frontier at Kasmor, thus presenting a *border frontage of about 800 miles towards British territory*. By a reference to the map, it will be seen that the portion of this border between Chilas and the Takhti Suleman, as above described, follows a very devious course, for the most part winding along the base of the numerous offshots from the mountain ranges connecting the Sufed Koh with the Takhti Suleman on the south, and with the great southern emanations from the Hindu Cush to the north.

It is to this portion of the frontier that I purpose limiting my remarks, for within its bounds are contained the several passes by which invading armies from the west have entered India.

Our North-West Frontier, then, as we received it from the Sikhs, and as it still is with us, extends in an irregular and ill-defined line, merely along the base of the mountain region separating the Indus valley from the Cabul highlands. These mountains may be described in general terms as forming a continuous, though somewhat uneven chain, with a generally bare and rocky aspect towards the southern portion of the range, and with a more or less wooded or pine-clad surface in its northern portion. They are traversed by a series of passes leading down from the Cabul highlands to the Indus valley, and are inhabited by a number of different Pathan tribes, of whom those located on the western slopes are the subjects of the Cabul Government;

whilst those occupying the eastern slopes, where the valleys mostly open directly on to the Indus valley, and all, either directly or indirectly, drain into it, are, as regards government, taxes, and allegiance, thoroughly independent.

With the first set of these tribes we are not now concerned, and therefore, passing them over, will proceed to notice most briefly the tribes in immediate contact with our border. Beginning with the Kaghan border, we have on the Black Mountain, east of the Indus, the Hassanzais and Kohistanis or Swatis. The latter were originally emigrants from Swat, with which valley they communicate across the Indus through the Chaghurzai hills and Buner. Both these tribes together muster about 2,000 fighting men.

Below Kaghan, but on the west of the Indus, directly opposite Hazarah, are the eastern slopes of the Mahaban mountain. They are occupied by the Otmanzais and Amazais; the latter are mostly located on the northern and western slopes of this mountain. Portions of both these tribes are settled on the Yusufzai plain within the British border. Those without the border can together muster about 2,500 fighting men. On the southern slopes of Mahaban are the Gaddun tribe. They directly overlook the Yusufzai plain, and can also muster altogether near 2,500 soldiers.

Beyond Mahaban, towards the Swat border, are the cantons of Chamla and Buner, communicating with the Yusufzai plain by half a dozen separate passes, of which those of Ambela and Malandara are the easiest and most used, and inhabited by a number of tribes belonging to the great Yusufzai clan. Taken together, and including the Chaghurzais, they can muster about 6,000 fighting men. Amongst these tribes is settled the colony of Hindustani fanatics, known as the Sitana Wahabis—the sworn enemies of the British. Their chief settlements are in Buner and the Chaghurzai hills, and they are reckoned to have 1,200 sepoys.

North of Buner is the extensive and populous valley of Swat, the south-western portion of which is separated from the British territory by a high and regular range of hills extending from the Buner border to the Swat river, where it emerges from the hills upon the Yusufzai plain. This range is traversed by eleven passes, connecting Swat with the Yusufzai plain. Most of them are very difficult, and only practicable by footmen, but those of Mora, Shakot, and Malakand are considered easy. They are the routes by which caravans travel from Peshawar to Chitral, Badakhshan, &c. Swat is a very important country in connection with the approach to India from the north-west. Through it, by Bajawar and the Hinduraj Pass into Kunar, is the main route to Jalalabad and Cabul. Alexander the Great and the Emperor Baber both entered India by this route, and it has also been used by columnus of most of the invading armies of the Ghaznivides and Mughals. Swat is, for other reasons, also an important trans-frontier district. It is the seat of the Akhun Sahib, a very powerful personage,—saint and king combined,—who entirely controls the actions of all the tribes between the Indus and Cabul, from the confines of Cashmir to those of Sind, and who is extremely hostile to all infidels, Europeans more particularly. The population of Swat is a mixed one, and contains Gujars, Hindkis, Cashmiris, Kohistanis or Swatis, and Afghans. The last are the dominant race, and belong to the great Yusufzai tribe. The general population is not considered warlike; it numbers, however, close on 100,000, if not more, and with Bajawar and Dir can turn out about 18,000 fighting men.

Next to Swat, following the circle of the Peshawar valley, is the Mahmand country. It is a network of low, bare hills lying between the Swat and Cabul rivers, and rising towards the north into the lofty Kohimor mountain, which forms the boundary between the Mahmands and the Tarkilanis

of Bajawar. Towards Cabul these hills open on the Jalalabad plain and the Kunar valley, whilst towards Peshawar they abut upon the Doaba plain (in the angle of junction between the Swat and Cabul rivers), which is British territory. Towards the south the Mahmands occupy a strip of hills on the right bank of the Cabul river, which, in its course through their country, is thus entirely in their hands. The Mahmands are a powerful tribe, numbering about 10,000 fighting men. Their chief town is Lalpura, on the left bank of the Cabul river, and opposite the western entrance to the Khybar Pass. They are supposed to be subjects of the Cabul Government, but their allegiance is merely nominal, as they pay no taxes. The Abkhana and Karappa routes, from Peshawar to Cabul, pass through their hills.

Adjoining the Mahmands are the Afridis, and next to them are the Orakzais, both large and powerful tribes, containing a number of sub-divisions, who occupy all that extensive hill region extending from the Cabul river round the spurs projecting from the eastern end of the Sufed Koh to the Kurram valley.

Of this extensive tract, all opening on, and drained into, the Indus valley, the Afridis occupy that portion between the Cabul river and Kohat, and from this point onwards to Kurram, from which they are separated by the Zwaemukhts, are the Orakzais.

The Afridis are the best armed and the most warlike of all the border tribes, and they can muster about 20,000 fighting men. Through the northern portion of their country pass the Khybar and Tatarra routes between Peshawar and Cabul. On the south of the Khybar Pass, their hills project eastwards towards the Indus, and very considerably indent the British border, thus separating, by a strip of independent hills, our two most important frontier garrisons—Peshawar and Kohat. There are two passes through these hills, the

Galli and the Jawaki, but both are out of the direct control of the British, who pay the Afridis of the Galli pass Rs. 13,700 a year for its use.

The Orakzais, who extend from Kohat to the Kurram, along the eastern and southern offshoots from Sufed Koh, overlook the Miranzai valley. They can muster about 18,000 fighting men. They share the Tirah plateau with the Afridis, and, like them, have no connexion with the Cabul Government or country. All their trade and dealings are direct with the British territory.

Beyond the Orakzais are the Zwaemukht, Afghans, and the Toris. They occupy the Kurram valley as far as the Pewar Pass, and are subjects of the Cabul Government. Together they muster about 8,000 fighting men.

Next come the Waziris, a very large and powerful tribe, divided into several important divisions, who occupy all the hill tract from Kurram and Miranzai to the Gomal or Galeri Pass south of Tâk. They hold both sides of this pass, which is the great route by which the trade of Afghanistan and Central Asia passes into India. Altogether the Waziris muster about 20,000 fighting men. Between the Miranzai and Bannu valleys, their hills, projecting into the British border, approach the Bahadur Khel salt mines, from which they are separated by the Latammar Pass.

Below the Waziris are the Shiranis and the Ashtaranis. The former occupy the Takhti Suleman, and the adjoining portion of the range proceeding south from it; and number about 5,000 fighting men. In their country is the Zarkani Pass, the great caravan route between Candahar and the Derajat. The Ashtaranis occupy the Suleman range from a little south of the Takht to the Korah Pass, opposite to which is the British outpost of Doulatabad. They are a small tribe, and number about 1,000 fighting men. The Korah Pass is the southern limit of the independent Pathan

tribes. South of this point come the Balochis, who are partly independent and partly settled within the British border.

Now, it will be seen from the above brief sketch that our North-West Frontier, from the Korah Pass to the top of the Kaghan glen, that is, from the southern to the northern limit of the independent Pathans, presents a frontage of about 600 miles towards the British territory; that the whole of this tract, pierced at intervals by a series of mountain passes connecting Afghanistan with India, slopes towards, and is drained into, the Indus valley; and that it is inhabited by a succession of independent tribes, all of the same language and nationality, whose *connections and dealings are entirely with our territory*.

Let us now consider the character of these tribes, and the nature of our dealings with them since we took possession of the Trans-Indus provinces in 1849.

In general terms, the whole of these tribes may be described as utter barbarians, (some perhaps less so than others,) steeped in the grossest ignorance. By birth they are savages, and by profession robbers. Beyond the care of their flocks and fields they follow no industrial pursuits. Under no authority at home, they are constantly at feud with each other, and hostility with their neighbours. Murder and robbery are with them mere pastimes; revenge and plunder the occupation of their lives. The circumstances under which they live have endowed them with the most opposite qualities,—an odd mixture of virtues and vices.

Thus they are hardy, brave, and proud; at the same time they are faithless, cunning, and treacherous. Frugal in their own habits, they are hospitable to the stranger, and charitable to the beggar. The refugee they will protect and defend with their lives, but the innocent wayfarer they will plunder and slay for the pleasure of the act. Patriotic in a high degree, and full of pride of race, yet they will not scruple

to betray for gold their most sacred interests or their nearest relations. Professedly they are Mahomedans, but their knowledge of the religion is very hazy, and they never hesitate to set aside its tenets when they happen to be opposed to their desires or interests. They are nevertheless extremely bigotted, are entirely controlled by their priests, and are at all times ready for a *jahâd*, be the infidels black or white.

Secure in the recesses of their mountains, they have from time immemorial defied the authority of all the governments (barbarous governments) that have preceded us on this frontier, and, gathering courage from their success, have for centuries been the terror of the peaceful cultivators on the plains, whose crops and cattle, whose maidens and wives, they have always looked upon as fair game for plunder. Lastly, disunited by mutual jealousies and clan feuds, they are incapable by themselves of combining in a common enterprise distant from their hills; but they have never failed, on the passage of invading armies from the west, to swarm down from their mountain retreats to swell the ranks of the plunderers, in the hope of reaping a rich harvest on the plains of India.

Such being the character of these tribes, the nature of their conduct towards us, and of our dealings with them *during the past eighteen years*, will not appear surprising. Briefly stated, they are as follow :—

During the first years of our possession of the Trans-Indus border, these independent hill tribes, generally in collusion with some of our own subjects, treated our authority much in the same manner as they had been accustomed to do that of our predecessors; that is to say, they carried their customary raids into the plains plundered and burnt our villages, murdered our subjects and carried off their cattle, and then, on being called on to make restitution, they bid us defiance, and, when the opportunity occurred, murdered our officers.

On the failure of peaceable means of obtaining satisfaction for these injuries and insults, our Government adopted one or other of *three courses*, according to the circumstances of each particular case, and not unfrequently it has been found necessary to adopt all three courses in succession. Thus, we either made reprisals, seizing all the cattle, property, or men of the offending tribe that we could lay hands on within British limits till they came to terms, or, if this course did not prove successful, we resorted to a blockade of the offending tribe, closing the passes leading from their country, confiscating their property, merchandize, &c., within the British border, and seizing their men as hostages wherever found. If this course also failed to produce the desired result, we organized a military expedition against the offending tribe, penetrated to their homes in the hills, and there, exacting reparation, punished them either by fine, or by burning their villages and destroying their crops, and then returned to our own territory, leaving the tribe to its own devices.

Since these expeditions have always proved signally successful as military enterprises, their results so far have been satisfactory. The tribes thus punished—being taught that they are not beyond our reach in their mountain recesses—have always behaved better after such a visitation. These expeditions, however, although they have entirely put a stop to the large raids that used formerly to occur, and have materially improved the general tranquillity of the border, have not in any way tended to the security of our frontier, nor have they operated so as to improve our relations with the border tribe.

The repressive and punitive measures hitherto adopted by us have failed in these respects, because they have been counteracted by the conciliating policy and extreme forbearance we have coupled with them. Now, although conciliation and

forbearance are admirable aids to a just government, still, when employed on a frontier like this, without in the *smallest degree exercising our authority or jurisdiction over the border tribes*, who, though personally irresponsible and independent, are nevertheless entirely dependent on us in every other respect, they become deprived of the beneficial action which, under the opposite course, they are calculated to produce.

Notwithstanding the many, and often grave, provocations we have received from the raids, murders, and other offences of the border tribes, we have never annexed a foot of their territory, nor have we ever exacted a rupee of revenue from them. We have contented ourselves with simple retaliation, and then left the offenders to their own guidance. We have placed no restrictions on their free access to and from our territories, we have in no way interfered in their affairs, nor have we taken any action to control their conduct towards us. Is this what we should have done? And can we now be surprised that they in return show and express undisguised hostility? Our conciliation and forbearance they neither appreciated nor understood. The one they have attributed to fear, and the other to weakness. Their country they jealously close against us and our subjects, and are themselves only prevented from overt violence by the force we are obliged to array against them—a force which they manage to keep constantly on the alert.

In the foregoing sketch of the independent Pathan tribes on our North-West Frontier, the *number of their fighting men is in the aggregate calculated at 83,000* (and the estimate is a very moderate one) *spread over a border of 600 miles in length*. They are kept in check by a chain of about twenty forts, and between eighty and ninety smaller military and police stations. These are garrisoned and held by a force of 25,000 troops, “regular and irregular,” and about half that number of police, both district and village.

Not reckoning the innumerable smaller collisions with these border tribes, no less than twenty-five military expeditions have been led against them into their hills since 1849; and, at this present time of writing, another on a large scale is being assembled for action against the Hassanzais on the Hazarah border.

Thus, after eighteen years of contact with these border tribes, we are now on *worse terms with them than we were at first*.

Let us now see how these facts affect the security of our frontier. As the border hills all open on to the Indus valley by passes, not one of which is under our control, it is easy to see how great is the danger that threatens us. The hill tribes have it in their power to rush down on the plain at any time, and under ordinary circumstances we can meet and account for them. But if by a combination (and of late years neighbouring tribes have learned to combine) all or several of these tribes were to invade our territory at one and the same time from their respective hills, the effect would at least prove embarrassing to us, especially whilst Peshawar and Kohat, our two most important military posts, are separated, as is now the case, by a strip of independent and hostile hill territory. Further, with such firebrands as the Akhun of Swat and the Sitana Wahabis on our immediate border, a powerful and unscrupulous enemy would not find it a very difficult task to stir into action these elements of mischief. A successful intrigue with the Cabul Government could not fail to raise the whole border in a ferment against us, and precipitate an invasion for which we are little prepared.

Yet, with these facts and possibilities staring them in the face, we have the advocates of the inaction policy telling us to put our trust in these very frontier tribes, as the future defenders for, and with us of, their passes against the advance of

Russia or any other enemy from the west. They forget that the Pathan never forgives an injury, and that he has a good many scores against us to be wiped off on the first favourable opportunity; whilst, against the Russians, he has no cause for complaint, except that he is an infidel only to be endured so long as he proves profitable. Neither do they consider that the *prospects of the plunder of the rich cities of India would far outweigh* in their influence our most extravagant bids for the favour and friendship of these born robbers: they would without doubt willingly accept our bribes, but they would assuredly plunder us afterwards. Nor do they make any provision for disaffection amongst our own subjects on the border, who in thought, desires, and ways, as in language and nationality, are one with their brethren in the hills; who, since they came under our rule with the annexation of the Punjab, boast that, though they are our subjects, they have never been conquered by us; and who, since the mutiny of 1857, have the conceit to think they saved India for us.

Having thus shown that our North-West Frontier, with its 800 miles of hills opening on to the Indus valley, and inhabited by warlike and hostile tribes who can turn out between 80,000 and 100,000 armed men, whilst at no time an easily defended border is, *under existing circumstances*, not only a source of *weakness to the empire*, but one which, in the event of a hostile invasion from the west or north, would prove a *positive danger* to our rule in India, it remains to point out a course we might adopt, perhaps with advantage, in order to secure our position there, and to avert the dangers that at present menace us.

Before doing so, let us first glance at the relative positions of ourselves and the Russians—of ourselves seated inactive and expectant at the foot of the Sulmans, and of the Russians resting after their victorious march to the Hindu Cush, and stealthily preparing the way to the invasion of India.

As for ourselves, we have our railways and our ships; we have a splendid European army, and an unlimited supply of native soldiers; we have, besides, the resources of the country at our disposal. But, at the same time, we have a vast number of discontented subjects in our midst; and we have in the very heart of the empire a nest of independent little armies, whose feelings cannot be otherwise than unfriendly; and we have, besides, a hostile nation arrayed against us on the very frontier where the danger threatens, without the power, from our present position, of either directing their conduct, or controlling their acts.

Russia, on the other hand, has her steamers and her ships on the rivers and lakes of Turkistan; she has there also her national troops, supported by the Tartar hordes, the finest light cavalry in the world, and by the Afghan mountaineers, who in all Asia have no equal as swordsmen, whilst both make the best Guerilla soldiers. Besides these advantages, she carries with her the prestige always attaching to the invader; and, from her mere position on the Hindu Cush, completely subordinates to her designs both Persia and Afghanistan. Further, she has India before her as a field for intrigue, and a border hostile to us inviting her interference.

But, supposing Russia has no intention of invading India, still her mere presence in such close vicinity, and in so commanding a position as the Hindu Cush—a position so far superior to ours at the foot of the Sulemans—whilst fixing distrust on the native mind, will enable her to disturb the tranquillity of India at any time it may suit her interests to keep us occupied in this quarter, whilst she forwards her own designs in Turkey. True, Russia is not yet at the Hindu Cush; but to this point she must advance unless we prevent her, for Balkh is properly a part of Bokhara (which is already Russian), and has only in recent years been annexed to Cabul. Besides, it may be urged that the first sign of overt

hostility against India on the part of Russia will be noticed and settled by us in Europe. Grant that it is so : where is the profit if India in the meanwhile becomes revolutionized? With all these contingencies before us, it is now high time that we made some preparation to meet them. To await the actual advance of Russia, and to fight her on the plains of the Punjab, the preceding description of our frontier will have shown to be at the least a very doubtful measure as regards success. For, besides being fronted by a European army, we should have the frontier inundated by swarms of savage plunderers spreading fire and sword wherever they went, and Guerilla bands, we should find, would rise into existence and activity in the very centre of the empire.

Our proper course, then, and in fact now the only safe one left to us, *is to take up a better position than the one we at present occupy.* To be secure in India, we must have as the gates of the empire the Khybar Pass with Jalalabad in the north, and the Bolan Pass with Kelati Nasir in the south, and both these in our own keeping.

With them in our possession India will be safe, and her mind at rest; our prestige will be restored, and Russia baffled. Passing over the Bolan, let us confine our attention to the north.

With Jalalabad as our frontier post, and with the Kurram and Kunar valleys as our border, we should hold all the passes from the Takhti Suleman to the Hindu Cush on the confines of the Cashmir territory. That is to say, we should possess all the routes from Cabul to India, which, from the earliest ages, have been used by the invading armies from the north.

Fixed at Jalalabad, we should be in a position to command Cabul, which is the central point to which converge all the routes from the north and west towards India; and with the command of Cabul we should control the whole of Afghan-

istan. With a British garrison at Jalalabad, we should be in a position to guarantee the peace and security of Afghanistan on the one hand, and to settle the independent Pathans on our Punjab border on the other.

With our troops on both sides of the Sufed Koh, and on both sides of the Khybar, the intervening hills are at our disposal, and must fall under our rule; the subjection and civilization of their wild inhabitants, who are now the curse of their neighbours on both sides, will then only wait our own pleasure and convenience.

With our authority established at Jalalabad, and with our embassy at the Court of Cabul, we shall be able to exert our proper influence in the affairs of Central Asia, and to protect our residents at Candahar, Herat, and Bokhara. From this point, too, we shall be able to deal with the Akhun of Swat—whose youthful son has already been introduced to the people as his successor—and also with the Sitana Wahabis, and their new leader, Feroze Shah; and thus we shall get rid of the prime causes of all our difficulties on this frontier, and the great obstacles to our progress in friendship with the people of this province.

In this advanced line as our North-West Frontier there are several magnificent sites as sanitarium for our European troops, and a most promising field for Missionary work amongst the friendly tribes of Kafirstan. Besides these, the commercial advantages of the country are very great. Its higher mountains are covered with forests of the finest timber; whilst silk, iron, fruits, and honey are, with rice and butter, articles of export to the plains. But, apart from all these considerations and advantages, the mere fact of our being in possession of Jalalabad, the mere presence of a British garrison there, would give us immense strength; it would restore our prestige, (now at a low ebb,) and at once settle the minds of the natives of

India, and assure them of our ability to defend our Indian Empire.

The advance of our frontier to Jalalabad, and the watershed of the Kurram and Kunar valleys, will, in the opinion of some, be pronounced as only a half measure. It may be so, but it appears to be the only measure, short of annexation of the Cabul kingdom, which is calculated to meet all our wants. Its possession, either by treaty or annexation, *is now, at all events, a necessity.*

Others, whilst acknowledging the necessity of some kind of action on our part, under the present aspect of affairs on our North-West Frontier and Central Asia, think that our interests can be satisfactorily secured by treaty, and by the presence of British Officers at the Cabul Court, without a resort to military operations, which they consider to be a measure full of dangers and difficulties, and one not to be lightly undertaken. Certainly, we may make treaties, and depute our Officers to the Court of Cabul; but with our border in a state of insecurity, and the passes to Afghanistan in the hands of uncertain hill tribes, we are not in the position for our wishes to carry the weight that our interests demand. A resort to military action, therefore, would not be without very good effect (its dangers and difficulties have been much exaggerated); they are not beyond the power and skill of our many experienced and talented officers, both political and military, now serving on the frontier. Besides, admitting the force of these arguments, if the measure is proved to be necessary to our security in India, it should be at once adopted at all hazards. And whether such necessity has now been proved to *exist, must rest with the reader's judgment.*

AFGHANISTAN AND OUR POLICY.

AFGHANISTAN never enjoyed independence as a separate kingdom till about one hundred and twenty years ago, when, on the death of Nadir Shah, the Durrani empire was founded by Ahmad Khan, a Noble of the Suddozai branch of the Abdalli tribe, whose location is in and about the Herat province. For centuries previous to this time, the country had been either alternately a province of the Mughal empire in India, or a part of the Persian kingdom, or else it was divided between these two great Asiatic States, and occasionally it enjoyed brief periods of independence under local chiefs.

Ahmad Khan, Saddozai, was the first who, in 1747, raised Afghanistan to the status of an independent kingdom, and extended its limits from Herat to Cashmir. He reigned twenty-six years, during which he proved himself an able and just ruler, and raised the country to a pitch of prosperity previously unknown. On his death he was succeeded by his son, Shah Taimur, who, lacking the talents and moderation of his father, soon, by a course of extravagance, cruelty, and debauchery, destroyed the newly-established peace and prosperity of the kingdom, and on his death, in 1793, left it in a state of the utmost poverty, discontent, and confusion.

The death of Taimur was the signal for the commencement of a struggle for the throne between his sons—a struggle just such as is now going on before our own eyes amongst the sons of the late Amir, Dost Mahomed Khan. He was at first succeeded by his son Zaman, who, as his father had done before him, made Peshawar his principal residence. He was extravagant, cruel, and oppressive, and soon brought upon himself the hostility of the Barakzai tribe by the

murder of their chief, Sarfaraz Khan. This crime lost him his throne, and, later, proved to be the ruin of his house and the decline of his tribe.

After a reign of four years, he was deposed by his half-brother Shah Mahomed, who, to deprive him of the power for further mischief, put out his eyes. Mahomed in turn was attacked by Shah Shuja-ulmulk (the full brother of Zaman), who, after a long and tedious pursuit of his enemy, finally captured and cast him into prison. Shuja-ulmulk then reigned in his stead, and made Peshawar his headquarters. But he too, in 1809, after only a brief reign, was forced to flee the country, owing to the hostility of the Barakzai tribe under their chief Fattah Khan, brother of the Sarfaraz Khan murdered by Zaman, the full brother of Shuja-ulmulk. At first he sought shelter with the Sikhs, and finally, after many wanderings and sufferings, in 1815, placed himself under British protection at Ludianah.

Futtah Khan in the meantime had liberated Mahomed from imprisonment and set him on the throne, with himself as Wazir. He soon found out his own power, and lost no time in taking advantage of his position to strengthen his own party, and this he did by appointing his own brothers and nephews to the several provincial governments of the kingdom and minor posts about the country.

The influence thus acquired by the Wazir Fattah Khan made him an object of hatred and jealousy to Kamron (the son of Mahmud), who, in 1818, caused him to be barbarously murdered. This tragedy once more threw the whole country into a convulsion. Each of the provincial governors (and they were all Barakzais, brothers and nephews of the murdered Wazir) at once declared his independence, and Herat alone remained to Mahmud and his son. Cashmir was lost to the Sikhs, and Peshawar, under the rule of the brothers Pir Mahomed, Yar Mahomed, Sultan Mahomed,

and Sayad Mahomed, (one in each of the four divisions of the district, inclusive of Kohat,) also became tributary to the Sikhs, who subsequently occupied the country with a strong military force. Cabul, with Jalalabad and Ghazni, fell to Dost Mahomed Khan; and Candahar, with Kalati Ghilzai and Girishk, was jointly ruled by the brothers Purdil, Rahmdil, and Kol ndil. All were sons of the murdered Wazir.

And such, notwithstanding the constant efforts of Shuja-ulmulk, continued, with few changes, to be the condition of the country when, in 1839, the British espoused the cause of Shah Shuja-ulmulk, and in the following year set him on the throne at Candahar as King of the resuscitated Durrani empire. The failure of our efforts was completed in the rebellion at Cabul, the death of the king, and the destruction of our army in the winter retreat of 1841-42. In the following year our connection with the country ceased, and Dost Mahomed, on his liberation by the British, hastening to Cabul, secured the government to himself, and assumed the title of Amir. As soon as he was settled in the government, he named his son (by a Popalzai mother), the late Wazir, Mahomed Akbar Khan, heir-apparent, in preference to the claims of his eldest son (by a Bangash mother) Mahomed Afzal Khan. Mahomed Akbar died in 1848, and his full brother Ghulam Haidar Khan was nominated heir-apparent in his stead.

By our conquest of the Punjab in 1849, the Sikh possessions beyond the Indus came under British rule, and Peshawar was garrisoned by our troops. About this time, in 1850, Amir Dost Mahomed Khan annexed Bulkh to his kingdom, and placed his eldest son Mahomed Afzal there as governor. In 1854 he added Candahar to his dominions, and appointed his heir-apparent, Ghulam Haidar Khan, to the government. In the following year relations between the British and Afghan Governments were resumed, and a treaty

of friendship was concluded with the Amir through the heir-apparent, who came to Peshawar for the purpose. A couple of years later, during the war with Persia, the Amir himself came to Peshawar, confirmed the treaty of friendship, and sought our assistance against the Persians. Shortly after his departure, a mission of three British Officers was deputed to the Court of the heir-apparent at Candahar. Their presence in the country saved the Punjab from an Afghan invasion during the Indian mutiny, and since their return a native agent has been maintained at the Court of Cabul on the part of the British Government.

In July, 1858, the heir-apparent, Ghulam Haidar, died, and his full brother Sher Ali Khan was nominated in his place. In May, 1863, the Amir annexed Herat, and died there on the 6th June, only a few days after the capture of the city, aged seventy-six years. The Great Amir—Amiri Kabîr Dost Mahomed Khan—although his rule was signalized by no single measure of general benefit either to the people or to the country, was, nevertheless, a singularly popular ruler. His intrepidity, vigour, and general success in war secured for him the ascendancy over the other chiefs as the favourite of the people, whilst his simple manners, free hospitality, rough-and-ready justice according to the Afghan code, and his ready intercourse with, and free accessibility to, all classes of his subjects, gained him the respect and affection of all.

For his undisturbed reign, and for the general prosperity of his rule after his return to Cabul, Dost Mahomed Khan is largely indebted to the British, who, on the downfall of their projects for the restoration of the Saddozais, magnanimously befriended this royal family in the ruin that befell them. They provided the numerous princes and chiefs of that tribe with handsome pensions and valuable service under the Government in India, and thus, whilst ridding Dost

Mahomed of a host of claimants to the throne, at the same time freed him from the machinations of a multitude of discontented and expatriated nobles, who, under other circumstances, would have proved formidable disturbers to the peace of his kingdom.

The death of Dost Mahomed Khan had been expected at any time during several years preceding its occurrence, and it was looked forward to as an unavoidable calamity with the gloomiest forebodings of its consequences; for it was well known that the elder sons would contest the succession with Sher Ali Khan, the Amir's nominee (and by many years a younger son by a favorite wife), and in anticipation of the event different factions had been already formed in the country.

Sher Ali succeeded his father as Amir in September, 1863, and at the commencement of his reign, if not a popular ruler, was certainly not odious to the people. His rule was considered mild and just, and he encouraged trade by the reduction of the tariff on both exports and imports. He gained, besides, a certain amount of support by his concessions to the priest-party, and by an avowed hostility towards the British. It was not long, however, before he had to face the opposition and intrigues of his elder brothers, Mahomed Afzal Khan and Mahomed Azim Khan, whose cause was prospered by Sher Ali's indiscreet and untimely reduction in the allowances granted to some of the Afghan nobles, a measure which did not fail at once to estrange them from his support.

Mahomed Azim, the Governor of Kurram and Khost, was the first to rebel; but an army being promptly despatched to coerce him, he was driven from his province, and sought shelter in British territory. Following this, Mahomed Afzal, Governor of Balkh, revolted, and raised the Turkistan province in rebellion. The Amir forthwith marched against him

with a considerable force, and by a piece of treachery, condemned even by Afghans, inveigled him into his power, and then, in violation of his oath, cast him into prison in August, 1864. He next turned his energies against the hostility of his captive son Abdurrahman Khan.

Mahomed Azim, having failed to get assistance from the British, towards whom he had always proved himself well disposed, and disgusted with the treatment he had received at their hands, now quitted their territory, and, passing through Swat and Badakhshan to Balkh, there joined his nephew Abdurrahman Khan. They soon raised a party in their favour, and effecting the release of Afzal Khan, attacked Cabul in March, 1866. The Amir Sher Ali Khan being defeated, fled to Candahar, and Mahomed Afzal Khan on the 21st May entered Cabul as Amir, and he was duly recognized as such by the British Government. He died on the 7th October, 1867, and was succeeded by his brother Mahomed Azim Khan as Amir, who in turn was also recognized as the *de facto* Amir at Cabul.

Sher Ali Khan, on the other side, after two unsuccessful attempts to recover his throne, and hopeless of assistance from the British, proceeded to Herat, and sought the aid of Persia. From thence returning to Candahar he organized a force, and made another effort to regain Cabul, but was signally defeated in a decisive battle fought at Kilati Ghilzai on 22nd January, 1867. In this battle he lost his favourite son Mahomed Ali, a youth of remarkable talents and great promise. He was killed in single combat by his uncle Mahomed Amin Khan (Sher Ali's full brother), who himself was then cut down by the attendant soldiers. The sad death of these two near relatives had a powerful effect on Sher Ali, who at once fell back upon Candahar, and shut himself up to mourn over his losses. He is said to have quite lost his senses for a time through excess of grief.

The intelligence, however, of Mahomed Azim's accession to the throne as Amir roused him out of the state of lethargy into which he had fallen, and he decided on another attempt upon Cabul from Turkistan. But here also he was defeated, and at the same time lost Candahar. Finally, after negotiating with Russian agents in Turkistan, and collecting what money he could in the country, he repaired to Herat, where, getting aid from Persia and Russia in men and money respectively, he once more made preparations for the recovery of his throne. Having secretly enlisted the services of Mahomed Ismail Khan, who was in Balkh with Abdurrahman Khan, he himself purposed advancing towards Cabul by Candahar, for the recapture of which city he had despatched an army under his son Yakub Ali Khan.

Candahar was captured from Mahomed Sarwar Khan (son of Amir Mahomed Azim Khan) in April of this year, and, on the 10th of the following month, Sher Ali entered the city in state, amidst the acclamations of the citizens, who had been terribly oppressed by Sarwar Khan. From this point Sher Ali has slowly, but surely, made good his advance towards Cabul, and has already possessed himself of the country as far as Ghazni; whilst Mahomed Ismail Khan, having suddenly descended from Turkistan, has captured the city of Cabul in the name of the Amir Sher Ali Khan, and laid siege to the Bala Hissar, held by Shamsuddin Khan on the part of the Amir Mahomed Azim Khan, who himself, deserted by all but a handful of troops, has taken the field near Ghazni to give battle to his rival, and decided his own fate.

The popular voice is now in favour of Sher Ali, for Mahomed Azim, by his cruelties and oppressive rule, has disgusted the people of all classes, and is now without a friend amongst them. His only chance of safety now is a flight to Turkistan, where, effecting a junction with his nephew

Abdurrahman Khan, he may still be in a position to disturb Sher Ali in the peaceful possession of his regained throne.

And such, according to the most recent intelligence, is the present state of affairs at Cabul.

I will now briefly consider the prospects of the country as affected by the recent advances of Russia and our own inaction in reference to Afghanistan.

From the foregoing sketch of Afghan history it will be seen that, with few exceptional intervals, anarchy has been, for centuries past, the normal state of the country. Hence the general belief, which at this time exists, in the recurrence, at no distant date, of fresh disturbances and internecine wars is, coupled with the fact of rival claimants to the throne being still at large, to all appearance well-founded. There is, in fact, nothing in the past experience of the country, nor in the existing state of parties there, to warrant any other conclusion, unless some preponderating influence intervening from without operate to impart stability to one or other of the contending parties.

And that *such intervention must soon occur, now admits of no question*, for the Afghans, left to themselves, are incapable of uniting under any one of their own chiefs. They know, and are prepared for the event, that the kingdom, if unsided from without, must break up into separate independent chiefships, each at enmity with the other, and each on its own account intriguing with the great Governments between whose frontiers they all lie.

Such being the case, it behoves us to consider whence is to come the preponderating influence that is to restore quiet and stability to the country. There are but two sources whence it can proceed, *viz.*, from India and from Russia. And of these two, *the favouring circumstances are all on the side of India*. The proximity of the Indian and Afghan Governments, the intimate relations between

the two countries, and the decided preference of the Afghans for a British alliance, are all potent facts in favour of British intervention. But the British Government in India, although actually ruling a considerable portion of Afghanistan, a tract the population of which is estimated to exceed a million of souls, has, during the past five years, rejecting repeated applications for succour and countenance, persistently held aloof from all action. And this, too, at a period in the crisis of Afghan affairs when their intervention is, more than at any preceding period, required, not only for the direct advantage of Afghanistan itself, but also for the security and welfare of our Indian Empire.

The past history of the country proves that, whilst the proclivities of the western provinces of Afghanistan, of Candahar, and Herat have been generally towards Persia, those of Cabul have always been towards the paramount power in India. Passing over the Mughal period, the Cabul Government has (from the days of our earliest relations with it, from the days when, in 1809, Elphinstone's mission to Cabul, Peshawar, impressed the Afghans with the most lofty ideas of our power and munificence, alas! now rudely dispelled by that of Burnes twenty-eight years later) always been ready, I may say anxious, to secure the friendship and alliance of the British Government in preference to those of the Russian or Persian Governments. This was proved in the case of Dost Mahomed at Cabul in 1837, when, at the same time, he had at his Court both Burnes and Vicovitch, the British and the Russian envoys.

Although he then failed, as his sons have done now, in securing the good offices of the British Government in India, he nevertheless saw, on his resettlement in the Cabul Government, that his true interests lay in a good understanding with the British. In 1857, during the Persian occupation of Herat, the opportunity arose, and the confir-

mation of a treaty of peace and friendship entered into a couple of years earlier was renewed.

This preference for the British alliance still exists amongst the Afghans, notwithstanding the persistent rejection of their advances, and the disappointment resulting from the failure of their expectations of aid and countenance from us in the settlement of their internal troubles. But to evolve the feeling now, after the bitterness produced by our stern apathy to their wants, will be a delicate, and not very easy matter; but it must be done, as Afghanistan is now at its last extremity of helplessness, and, unless speedily given a helping hand by us, must, in self-defence, fall back upon Russia, and ultimately become absorbed into her empire. An alliance with Persia need not occupy our attention, for that power is but the tool of Russia; and any alliance made with Afghanistan in her name may be put down as made with Russia; for with Persia itself Cabul has no affinity.

Of the nature of Russia's intentions towards Afghanistan there is no doubt. Her agents and her gold have both freely entered the country during the past few years of its distraction and disorganization. Meanwhile, Russia herself has advanced her frontier from the Jaxartes to the Oxus, from the Syr Zarya to the Amu Zarya; for since Bokhara is now her tributary, the latter river is, to all intents and purposes, the present Russian frontier towards India. Now, with Bokhara as her frontier, Russia comes into direct contact with Balkh, the northernmost province of Cabul, to which it was annexed, in 1850, by Dost Mahomed. The result of this contact must be to force on a further advance to the Hindu Cush, which is the goal of Russia's ambition, as is abundantly evident from the course hitherto pursued by her. Its possession gives her the command of both the routes to India, by Cabul direct and by Herat, and the only intervening territory is that of Balkh and its adjacent petty independent states, none of which are

capable of making any resistance. In fact, the subjection of Balkh and Kunduz, for the route to Cabul by Bamian, and of Andkhœ and Maimanna, for the route from Balkh to Herat, is all that now remains to place Russia on the Hindu Cush, at a distance of less than four hundred miles by road from the British frontier at Peshawar.

To sum up, then, the result of our continued inaction and abstention from intervention in the affairs of Cabul and Central Asia has been to disturb the minds of our Indian subjects with apprehensions of all sorts of impending dangers and disturbances, to shake the confidence of all the bordering tribes and nations in our power and prestige, to encourage Russia in the boldness of her aggressions, and to impair the integrity of Afghanistan as a buffer between our Indian empire and Russia.

If longer persevered in, this policy must result in the desertion by Cabul from our alliance, and her subordination to Russian interests, with the unknown perils that these are calculated to lead to. The remedy for all these evils, however, is still practicable, and is summed up in the three words "*prompt, vigorous action.*"

And that such a policy is now the only safe course left to us, I will endeavour to show by an examination of our North-West Frontier as a defensible position.

The rapid progress made by the Russians in Turkistan during the past five years, and their present activity there; the disturbed state of Afghanistan during the same period, and the uncertainties attending the stability of the Cabul throne; the general excitement and alarm produced by these events in the minds of the natives of India; and the widespread distrust evinced by the Indian public, both native and European, in the policy of inaction hitherto pursued by Government,—all these circumstances have now, more urgently than ever, forced the consideration of the Central

Asian question on the serious attention of our statesmen, and have furnished abundant matter for discussion to our politicians, from whom they have, from time to time, drawn forth the exposition of their views on this most important question of our times.

These views and opinions, necessarily differing according to the political bias and experience of the several writers on the subject, are all based on the fact of the rapid and vast extension of Russian territory and rule towards India. But, however varied they may be, these opinions are resolvable into one or other of the two classes representing the great rival parties into which writers on this subject are divided. The one party, fearing no harm from Russia, and satisfied with the security of our present position, advocate a policy of rigid inaction; the other, seeing only India's ruin in the advance of Russia, and alarmed at our defenceless position and unprepared state, urge the absolute necessity of a prompt and vigorous action.

Those who range themselves as the exponents of the views of the first party above-mentioned, represent the establishment of Russian rule in Central Asia, and the states immediately bordering on our North-West Frontier, as the greatest blessing that could occur, as an event devoutly to be wished for, as a movement calling for our best sympathies and support. Under Russian rule, they picture forth the spread of Christianity, the abolition of slavery, the introduction of law and order, the inauguration of a reign of peace and plenty, the increase of trade, and the peaceable intercourse of nations. In fact, countries now steeped in vice and ignorance—the prey of a lawless soldiery and fanatic priesthood, the hotbeds of anarchy and violence, and, above all, through very excess of hatred to his race, forbidden ground to the European—are in some marvellous manner to be thoroughly regenerated, and that, too, by a power itself

but recently emerged from a state of barbarism very little superior to that in which they are still sunk.

With such notions of the blessings to be scattered broadcast over the God-forsaken states of Central Asia by Russian Christianity and civilization—blessings, be it remembered, which would be inestimable were they those of true Christianity and true civilization—these writers look upon the prospect of the speedy or remote (as the case may be) contact of the British and Russian possessions in Asia as a matter for congratulation.

Russia and England as neighbours in Asia, say they, are a guarantee for the peace of the world, for the peaceable solution of the Eastern question, for the balance of power in Europe.

The restless energies of the two mightiest of the nations of Christendom, they would have us believe, when brought to a standstill in the career of their conquests by collision on the debateable ground of Central Asia, are quietly to be diverted into other channels, and expended in friendly rivalry and emulation in the development of their respective conquests. The conversion of the Hindu and Mussulman, the cultivation of the arts and sciences of modern civilization, the education of the people, and the protection of commerce, these are to be the bonds of future brotherhood and peace between the Briton and the Russ, between the bold and hardy invaders of the North and the timid and soft cultivators of the South.

We are to anticipate, they tell us, no danger to the peace of India in the mere fact of the native home of its Asiatic conquerors—of the Mughal and the Pathan—being in the hands of a rival power; of a power, too, smarting under defeat at our hands, and by us thwarted on the Bosphorus; in the hands of the power whom all the world have watched in its patient and persevering endeavours for the reconsidera-

tion and settlement of the Eastern question. Nor is the fact that fully three-fourths of the Mussulman population of India (who, in common with all Moslems, despise us as Christians and hate us as rulers) are bound as much by the ties of kindred and nationality to their ancestral tribes in the north as by those of a common religion, in their view, to be reckoned a matter of serious moment, although the latter be under the rule and control of that rival Christian power whose ambition in Europe has for the time been checked by us.

Thus imbued with a false estimate of the civilizing policy of Russia, and led away by Utopian views of a future to be signalized by the spread of a common Christianity and civilization, these writers would assure us that there is no cause for alarm in the extension of the Russian rule to the borders of India. They believe not in the ambitious designs of Russia, nor do they see in her advance towards the East the steady prosecution of an old and acknowledged policy. According to them, the progress of the Russian Empire eastward has been brought about by the force of circumstances affecting the commercial interests of her southern provinces, just as the growth of our Indian Empire has been the result of forces acting beyond our own control. Nothing more. That it is possible for Russia seated on the Hindu Kush to menace India and thus to embarrass us in Europe, they admit. But to meet any such contingency they are satisfied with our present position and resources, and, pointing to the Suleman range and Khajbar, tell us that they are our secure barrier against invasion from the west. This mountain chain they pronounce to be the real and natural limit of our Indian Empire, and they bid us rest content and secure behind the shelter of its protection, forgetful of the fact that it has never yet served to check the progress of any one of the successive invaders from the north,

from the days of Alexander the Great to those of Nadir Shah.

Any advance beyond these mountains they denounce as not only an unwarrantable aggression, but as a movement in itself radically wrong, as an act opposed to our own interests. Such a step, say they, would be merely playing into the hands of our rival. Such a move they denounce as an enterprise not only costly and pregnant with hazard, but as one without aim and without limit, as a step that leads us on to a field the bounds of which are more extensive than we are at all prepared to contemplate, and that commits us to a course calculated to embroil us in complications and difficulties of which our rival would not fail to take advantage.

Accordingly, as regards India and the Russians in Central Asia, these writers insist on the observance of a policy of rigid non-interference with all beyond our border. Let us, say they, leave these barbarous tribes to make their own dispositions for defence against Russia. We know them and don't value them. Our former dealings with them were not of a satisfactory nature. They are mere savages, and their fidelity is not to be trusted. Any dealings we may enter into with them cannot result to our advantage. If swallowed up by Russia, so much the better, and we wish her joy on the acquisition. Under her rule they will at least become civilized, and we shall be rid of lawless and savage neighbours at the cost of others. So let us leave them alone to their own devices.

But, they continue, let us keep on good terms with the hill tribes on our border. Let us encourage them to look on us as their friends. Then, by-and-bye, should the necessity arise, we can count on their assistance in defending the border passes. And this is all that it is necessary we should do here.

As for the rest of India, we must develop the resources of the empire, improve the administration of the laws, educate the people, and give the natives a larger share in the government. By such means we shall gain the good-will of the people, and in the time of danger they will gather round us with their support. We must extend railway communication, and in the first place connect Peshawar with Calcutta and Karachi by rail. We must bridge our rivers, and open up the country by roads. We must strengthen our frontier with a chain of forts at the outlets of the passes, and raise our native army to the highest state of discipline and efficiency, and arm it with the best weapons of the day.

And thus prepared we can confidently await the Russian, and meet him on the plain should he succeed in forcing the passes.

Such, in sum, are the arguments of those who, in the present state of affairs in Central Asia, advocate a policy of strict non-interference—a course of dignified inaction.

Their opponents, who urge the necessity of a policy of prompt and vigorous action, hold directly opposite opinions.

In this swift progress of Russia towards the East they see cause for the greatest alarm. Her establishment in Central Asia they view as a direct menace to India, as the accomplishment of a deep scheme for the compassing of her designs on Turkey. In Russia settled in the cradle whence have proceeded the conquering nations of Asia, they discern the elements of untold troubles and dangers to our rule. The excitement and distrust which the movements of Russia in Central Asia have already produced amongst the Mughals and Pathans of India, they notice as a sign of sinister import, and one demanding our special regard and attention. The native armies maintained by our tributary and protected chiefs in Central India and the Deccan, they look upon as so many foci for sedition and revolt, as instruments

of danger not to be tolerated within the limits of the empire, as fields for Russian intrigue, and as connecting links between native aspirations and Russian ambition.

With Russia on our border, these writers foresee an era of discontent, intrigue, and sedition amongst a large and widely-scattered portion of our subjects. Her near presence, instead of acting as a stimulus to industry and trade, will have exactly the contrary effect. It will distract the country by restless rumours and threats of impending danger, unsettle the minds of the people by a general feeling of insecurity, disturb trade and check internal improvements by the operation of the same cause, shake the belief of the natives in our superior power and prestige, and, by affording them the opportunity of comparison between the merits of the two Governments, perhaps create a desire for change.

Bearing in mind the repeated invasions of India from the north, and the readiness with which the Border tribes on the route have joined the invading armies, they urge the pressing necessity of our securing without delay the approaches to our Indian Empire from that quarter. They point out the insecurity of our present border on the North-West Frontier, dilate on the inefficiency, in numbers, arms, and discipline, of our native army, and warn us against a blind reliance on the advantages of railway communication alone. They insist on the necessity of at once stopping the further advance of Russia, and see no safety for India except by an immediate advance into Afghanistan. The military occupation of this country, they say, is the only course left by which the designs of Russia can be thwarted. British garrisons in Cabul, Candahar, and Herat are, they affirm, the only guarantee for the stability of our rule in India.

These, in brief, are the arguments of those who, in the present aspect of affairs in Central Asia, urge on us the adoption of a policy of prompt and vigorous action.

Thus may be summarized the main arguments used by the two opposite classes of writers on this subject, *viz.*, by the party advocating a policy of dignified inaction, and the party advocating a policy of vigorous action,—vigorous, because any action at this stage of the game, and on Afghan ground, to be at all successful, must be energetic and decided. It will be well here to remind the reader that, of the two policies above described, the former, or that of inaction—the policy of masterly inactivity as it is generally designated—is the one that has hitherto prevailed in the judgment of our rulers. Its advantages, at the best, appear to be but few, whilst its dangers are many and grave. So far it has served to save its adopters from the reproach of fear or precipitancy, and here ends all that can be said in its favour. The loss of prestige it has produced, the cheap estimation and contempt to which it has brought our name amongst the border tribes and our own subjects, and the state of unpreparedness and inefficiency to which it has reduced us at a time when we should be most prepared for instant action, are not the least of its ill consequences.

But now, however, it is manifest that the time has arrived when something more is required of us than an inactive watching of events, and when a longer continuance in such a do-nothing expectant course will be fraught with the most serious mischief, both within and without our Indian Empire.

FINIS.