

given to the Russian Cabinet as to the views and intentions of the Government of India. The result of these communications was an entire agreement on three important principles: 1st, that the territory in the actual possession, at the present moment of Shere Ali Khan, should be considered to constitute the limits of Afghanistan; 2nd, that beyond those limits the Ameer should make no attempt to exercise any influence or interference, and that the English Government should do all in their power to restrain him from any attempts at aggression; 3rd, that, for their part, the Imperial Government should use all their influence to prevent any attack by the Emir of Bokhara upon Afghan territory.

These general principles were for the moment quite sufficient to have a most useful practical result, in enabling the Indian Government to give assurances to Shere Ali, and to give him advice also which tended to keep the peace, and to prevent any practical questions being raised. They were sufficient also to determine Russia in similar conduct in her relations with Bokhara, and in her relations also with fugitive members of Shere Ali's family who were pretenders to his throne. In all these matters both Russia and England acted with good faith on the spirit of the Agreement, during the whole of the three years and a half occupied by the discussion. But so long as there was no clear and definite understanding with Russia as to what she meant by "the territories in

the actual possession of Shere Ali," and so long especially as she avowed that she did not admit Badakshan and Wakhan to be a part of these territories, the Agreement had no permanent value. Accordingly, after the return of Mr. Forsyth to India, and after Lord Mayo and his Council had obtained the fullest information, both historical and geographical, on the northern extension of the Afghan Kingdom, they embodied their information in a despatch to me, dated May 20, 1870. It gave a precise definition to the northern and north-western frontiers of Afghanistan, emphatically asserted that they extended to the Upper Oxus, and indicated the point on the westward course of that river where they marched with provinces belonging to Bokhara.*

The Russian Government contested this definition of Afghanistan with some keenness, and especially insisted on representing Badakshan and Wakhan as dependencies of Bokhara. So late as December, 1872,† Prince Gortchakow maintained this view with extraordinary pertinacity, and offered a compromise on the western portion of Lord Mayo's boundary, which would have expressly abandoned the claim of Shere Ali to the disputed province of Badakshan. At last the Emperor of Russia personally intervened, and sent Count Schouvalow on a mission to London,

* Ibid., No. 60, Inclos., p. 45-7.

† Correspondence with Russia, 1873, No. 2, p. 4.

for the purpose of conceding the contention of the British Government that the Upper Oxus should be admitted as the northern frontier of Afghanistan. His Majesty said that "there might be arguments used respectively by the departments of each Government; but he was of opinion that such a question should not be a cause of difference between the two countries, and he was determined that it should not be so."* On the 24th of January, 1873, this admission of the Emperor was suitably acknowledged by Lord Granville,† and the discussion terminated.‡

I know it will be asked by scoffers what was the worth of this understanding when it had been laboriously attained? What was the worth of these assurances when they had been mutually exchanged? My answer is a very short one. They were of no value at all when the foreign policy of England came to be directed in the spirit of those by whom this question is asked. Neither international Agreements of this kind, nor even formal Treaties are worth anything in the event of war, or in the event of avowed preparations for war. Governments are not obliged

* *Ibid.*, No. 3, p. 12.

† *Ibid.*, No. 4, p. 13.

‡ It has been represented by Sir Henry Rawlinson that the admission by the Emperor of Russia of our contention respecting the limits of Afghanistan was conceded in order to secure our acquiescence in the Khivan Expedition. I see no proof of this. No British Government in its senses would have gone to war with Russia to prevent that Expedition.

to wait till the first actual blow has been struck by another Government, using, in the meantime, the language of insult and of menace. When the Prime Minister, speaking at Russia, boasted after a Guildhall dinner, that England could stand more than one, or even two, or even three campaigns; when the Home Secretary, speaking of Russia, told the House of Commons with mimetic gestures, that she was "creeping, creeping, creeping," where that Minister had known for months that Russia had openly declared she would go if she were required to do so; when the Cabinet as a whole had summoned the Reserves at home, and had ordered troops from India to enable them to act in the spirit of these harangues—then, indeed, peaceful understandings and Agreements became of no avail.

But if it is asked by reasonable men, and in a reasonable spirit, what the actual force and value of the understanding with Russia was, during the years when it was unaffected by passionate suspicions, and by undignified threats, then the question deserves a much more careful examination than has yet been given to it.

In the first place, then, it was not an Agreement which was understood by either party as prohibiting Russia from having any communication whatever with the Ameer of Cabul. This has been pretended or assumed, but it is not true. In the despatch of

Prince Gortchakow, dated the 7th of March, 1869,* which is one of the most authoritative documents in the case, the promise of Russia to abstain from the exercise of any influence in Afghanistan was given, indeed, in positive terms. But it was given also with an explanatory addition, which makes it quite clear wherein the whole force and meaning of that promise was understood to lie. What the Emperor disclaimed and abjured as "entering into his intentions" was, any "intervention or interference whatever opposed to the independence of that State." Communications of courtesy, or even communication having for their sole aim the promotion of commercial intercourse, were certainly not excluded by this engagement.

That this was the clear understanding of both parties before the passionate jealousy of our Ministers was roused by their own policy in the Turkish question, is proved by the whole course of events up to the appearance of that question above the political horizon. In June, 1870, after the Agreement had been fully established between the two Governments, Prince Gortchakow himself† communicated to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg a letter which General Kaufmann had addressed to Shere Ali on the very important and delicate subject of the asylum given at Tashkend to the fugitive Abdul Rahman Khan, one of the

* *Central Asia*, II., 1873, Inclos. p. 3.

† *Ibid.*, No. 58, p. 43.

aspirants to the throne of Cabul. This letter is a very full one, entering freely and frankly into an explanation of the political relations between Russia and Cabul, as well as of the relations between both and the Khanate of Bokhara. It addressed the Ameer, as "under the protection of the Indian Government," intimated that with that Government Russia was in friendly relations, warned him gently against interfering with Bokhara, as being under the protection of the Czar.* No hint was dropped by the British Ambassador that this direct communication from the Russian Governor-General to the Ameer of Cabul was considered as involving any departure whatever from the spirit or from the letter of the understanding between the two Governments. Within six days of the same date this very same letter came under the special notice of Lord Mayo, to whom it was referred by the Ameer as having somewhat puzzled and alarmed him. Lord Mayo took the trouble of writing an elaborate letter to Shere Ali, explaining the true meaning of General Kaufmann's letter, and expressing the highest satisfaction with it.† In December, 1873, the Government of India were acquainted with the fact that a letter of similar purport had been addressed to the Ameer in August of that year, informing him of the Russian conquest of Khiva.‡ No

* Ibid., No. 58, Inclos., p. 44.

† Central Asia, I., 1878, p. 184.

‡ Ibid., No. 5, Inclos. 2, p. 8.

adverse notice was taken of this fact by the Government of India, or by the Government at home. These facts, then very recent, were in possession of the present Government when they succeeded to office. But as neither Lord Mayo, nor Lord Northbrook, nor Lord Granville had remonstrated with Russia on the subject of these letters, so neither did Lord Derby nor Lord Salisbury. It is remarkable that the first of these letters from General Kaufmann which was transmitted to Lord Salisbury was one dated the 25th of February, 1874, acknowledging the nomination by the Ameer of Abdoollah Jan as his heir-apparent, and congratulating him on this selection.* Not one word of remonstrance was uttered—not one word of suspicion breathed. In May of the same year Lord Northbrook drew Lord Salisbury's attention—not to the mere fact that Shere Ali had received another letter from the Russian officer then in command at Tashkend,—but to the fact that in this letter allusion was made to some unknown request which the Ameer had made.† Still I find no record of any warning to Russia that her officers were violating the Agreement with England. In the Autumn of 1875 matters went still farther; not only was another letter sent from the Russian Governor-General of Russian Turkestan, but it was

* Ibid., No. 13, Inclos. 2, p. 15.

† Ibid., No. 15, Inclos. 1, p. 16.

sent by a messenger who is called an "Envoy." It was a letter informing the Ameer of the return to Tashkend of General Kaufmann after his absence for half a year at St. Petersburg. But it contained a sentence which caught the ever-wakeful attention of the Cabul authorities. Kaufmann spoke of the alliance between England and Russia as an "omen for those countries which under the protection of the Emperor of Russia, and the Queen of England, live in great peace and comfort."* The Afghan politicians seem to have put the somewhat overstrained interpretation upon this sentence that the Russian Government had made itself partner in the protection of Afghanistan. They said "this paragraph is in a new tone. God knows what State secrets are concealed in it." Still no alarm was taken. This news from the Cabul Diaries was forwarded to the Foreign Office without note or comment from the Indian Secretary. The reply of the Ameer was forwarded in similar silence on the 6th of January, 1876.† On the 25th of August the same ceremony was repeated,‡ and this time a very long letter from General Kaufmann to the Ameer was enclosed to the Foreign Office by Lord Lytton's Government, but still without any indications, even of uneasiness, on the subject. The letter gave a detailed narrative of the transaction which had led to the Russian conquest of Kokhand.§

* Ibid., No. 58, Inclos. 6, p. 65. † Ibid., No. 60, p. 66.

‡ Ibid., No. 69, p. 75. § Ibid., Inclos. 6, p. 77.

It is established therefore by a long series of transactions, extending over several years, and passing under the view of successive Ambassadors, Viceroys, and Secretaries of State, that the Agreement with Russia was not understood by either Power to preclude direct communications of courtesy passing between Russian officials and the Ameer of Cabul.

At last, on the 16th of September, 1876, but not sooner, the new Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton, telegraphed to Lord Salisbury that he had sent off a despatch expressing a decided opinion that her Majesty's Government ought to remonstrate with Russia on Kaufmann's repeated correspondence with the Ameer by hand of Russian agents, two of whom were reported to be then in Cabul. Lord Lytton added words which imply that the Government of India had before entertained objections to this intercourse, but "had not hitherto asked her Majesty's Government to formally remonstrate on this open breach of repeated pledges."* This assertion is unsupported by any evidence so far as regards the Government of India under previous Viceroys, and as Lord Lytton had then occupied that position for only five months, the self-restraint of the Government of India under the Russian provocation cannot have been of long endurance.

On the 22nd of September, 1876, Lord Salisbury forwarded this telegram to the Foreign Office, with the

* Ibid., No. 71, Inclos. pp. 79, 80.

wholly new and very important information that he "concurred in the views expressed by the Viceroy, and was of opinion that, as suggested by his Excellency, a remonstrance against General Kaufmann's proceedings should be addressed to the Russian Government without delay."*

It is remarkable that the Foreign Secretary, in complying with the request of his colleague, the Secretary of State for India, indicated a consciousness that Kaufmann's letters were not a breach of the Russian Engagement, and did not constitute a legitimate ground of diplomatic remonstrance. He took care to found his remonstrance not upon the letters, but upon "reports from other sources that the instructions of the Asiatic agent (who took the letter to Cabul) were to induce Shere Ali to sign an offensive and defensive alliance with the Russian Government, as well as a Commercial Treaty." This, of course, is an entirely different ground of complaint—and a legitimate one, if there had been the smallest evidence of its truth. But Lord Derby, without committing himself to belief in this report, confined himself strictly to it as the only ground on which remonstrance was to be made by our Ambassador. Lord Augustus Loftus was not ordered to ask from the Russian Government a promise that Kaufmann should write no more letters. He was only ordered to ask "a written disclaimer

* Ibid., No. 71, p. 79.

of any intention on their part to negotiate treaties with Shere Ali without the consent of her Majesty's Government."*

It is impossible not to ask when and how this new light came to flash on the Government of India and on the Indian Secretary of State. A little attention to dates, and to the character of contemporary events may perhaps help to explain the mystery.

It was in December, 1875, that the Cabinet of London had become aware that Russia was moving in concert with Austria-Hungary and with Germany for some intervention on behalf of the Christian subjects of the Porte.† On the 30th of that month the Andrassy Note had been signed at Buda-Pesth. This union of the "Three Emperors" had excited the jealousy and the fear of the Turkish party in England; and we have seen that on the 25th of January, 1876, the Cabinet of London had felt itself compelled, but with extreme and avowed reluctance, to give its adhesion to that celebrated Instrument. During the months of February, March, and April, 1876, further negotiations were being carried on between the same dreadful "Three" to secure the peace of Europe, by putting some effectual pressure on the Turks for the reform of their administration. During the month of April especially, the influence and the power of Russia

* Ibid., No. 72, p. 80.

† See ante, Vol. I, Ch. iv., p. 159.

in these negotiations was becoming more and more apparent, and were leading to some real concert among the Powers of Europe in spite of the dilatory and evasive policy of the Cabinet of London. They did at last produce in May the Berlin Memorandum, which, as a means of arriving at peace, was destroyed by the Queen's Government, but which as a means of fortifying Russia in the alternative of war, was immensely strengthened by the solitary resistance of the English Government.

It was in the midst of these transactions that the new Viceroy of India was appointed, and was charged with personal and with written instructions which will be examined presently. Before the 16th of September, the day on which Lord Lytton sent off his excited telegram about Kaufmann's letters, the European embroglio had become very thick indeed. Russia by her firm yet moderate attitude and language,—the public feeling of the British people and their just indignation against the Turks,—were compelling the Government to bow beneath the storm, and to threaten Turkey with complete abandonment in the event of Russia declaring war. But the keener spirits in the Cabinet were restive and fretful under this position of affairs. On the 20th of September, Mr. Disraeli had made his celebrated speech at Aylesbury,* and we can therefore understand with-

* See ante, Vol. I. Ch. vi., p. 270.

out much difficulty the feelings under which, two days later, Lord Salisbury declared, for the first time, and in the face of his own previous acquiescence,—that Kaufmann's letters to the Ameer were a breach of the Engagement between England and Russia in respect to their relations with Afghanistan.

Before proceeding, however, to trace the career of the new Viceroy of India in the Imperial policy which he went out to prosecute, I must return for a moment to the Agreement with Russia, for the purpose of pointing out one other condition of things, and one other course of conduct, which was almost as effectual as warlike threats in depriving it of all force and value. The course of conduct I refer to is that of dealing with the advances of Russia in Central Asia after the Agreement had been made, precisely in the same way in which we might have been entitled, or at least disposed, to deal with them, if no such Agreement had been come to. The whole object and purpose of the Agreement was to establish a boundary line beyond which we need not be in a constant fuss about Russian aggression. If there was any sense or meaning in an understanding that Afghanistan was not to be encroached upon, even by the influence of Russia, that meaning was that Russian advances which did not come near that Kingdom should cease to be the object of our jealousy and resentment. Even before that Agreement was made I never could see that, internationally, we had any more right to remonstrate with Russia on her

advances in Central Asia, than she would have had to remonstrate with us on our advances in Hindostan. Of course nations may make anything they choose a ground of quarrel and of war. But it is in the highest degree undignified on the part of any Government to be perpetually remonstrating with another upon acts which it is not prepared to resist, and which it is not in a position to prevent. For this reason, even before the Agreement with Russia was made, I have always regarded with a feeling akin to mortification the language of those who in the press, or in Parliament, or in diplomacy, have been continually declaiming against the natural and inevitable advances of Russia in Central Asia. But since the Agreement with Russia was concluded, acknowledging Afghanistan as under our predominant influence, and as excluded from the influence of Russia, it has always appeared to me that the continuance of this language is tainted, in addition, with something very like a breach of faith. It is not only undignified, but it is unfair, to accept that Agreement as binding Russia not to advance, either by actual conquest or by establishing influence, beyond a certain line, and at the same time as leaving us as free as ever to denounce her operations when conducted far within that line. Outside of Afghanistan, Russia unquestionably kept her freedom. We, of course, kept our freedom also. But there is no truth in representing any Russian movement beyond Afghanistan as a breach

of the Agreement of 1873. Yet this has been the actual conduct, I will not say of the English people, but of too many who assume to speak on their behalf. It has appeared even in the official language of Ambassadors and of Secretaries of State, and it has led public writers of high authority with their countrymen, to make accusations against Russia which on the face of them are unjust, and which have had a powerful effect in stimulating national animosities, and inspiring unmanly fears.

Of this a signal example is to be found in the language we have held upon the subject of Khiva. It is generally asserted, and widely believed, that in the conquest of Khiva, Russia has been guilty towards us of flagrant breaches of engagement. The papers presented to Parliament disprove this accusation altogether. They do more than this: they convict those who make these accusations of that kind of reckless misquotation, which, although often the effect of mere passion, approaches very nearly to the bad faith which they charge against Russia. We have habitually treated certain intimations made to us by Russia of her intentions, and certain declarations of her policy, as if those intimations and declarations were in the nature of binding promises and of international engagements. But the intimation of an intention is not necessarily a promise. A declaration, or an assurance as to policy is not necessarily, an engagement. It is not so in private life, and it is still less so in the intercourse of

nations. There may, of course, be circumstances which give a higher value to the intimation of an intention than would otherwise attach to it. If it is made, for example, as part of a negotiation, and in connexion with benefits received on account of it ; or, again, if it is made by a powerful nation to a weak one as an assurance on which it may rely,—then, indeed, such an intimation may assume the character of a promise. But this character entirely depends on the context not merely of words, but of circumstances and events. The mere intimation of an intention by one Government to another does not in itself amount to, or even imply, an engagement. This would be true, even if the intimations of intention, or the declarations of policy on which we rely, had been made without express reservations and explanations limiting their effect. But the intimations of intention, and the declarations and assurances as to policy which have been made to us by Russia, on the subject of her relations with the States of Central Asia, have been almost uniformly made under express and emphatic reservations which it is customary with us to suppress or to ignore. In the Circular Despatch to the Russian Ambassadors at the various Courts of Europe which was issued by Prince Gortchakow in November, 1864, the Cabinet of St. Petersburg set forth, for the information of the world, the principles which would guide her policy in Central Asia. In this State Paper not only was everything like a promise avoided, but

declarations were made obviously inconsistent with the possibility of any such promise being given. Russia likened her own position in Central Asia to the position of the British Government in India, and pointed out that annexations had been, and might still be, the necessary results of contact with semi-barbarous States. It is true that she expressed her desire to avoid this result if it were possible to do so. But she expressed also her determination to establish free commercial routes, and to punish tribes who lived on plunder. This in itself was tantamount to a declaration of war against all the Khanates of Central Asia. Russia did not conceal the import and the possible consequences of her determination in the matter. It demanded, as the Circular very truly said, "a complete transformation of the habits of the people." But no such transformation could be effected without "teaching the populations in Asia that they will gain more in favouring and protecting the caravan trade than in robbing it." Nor was the Circular silent on the methods of operation which were contemplated for the purpose of teaching this lesson. "It is a peculiarity of Asiatics," it said, "to respect nothing but visible and palpable force." "If, the robbers once punished, the expedition is withdrawn, the lesson is soon forgotten: its withdrawal is put down to weakness." Finally, with a downrightness of expression which leaves nothing to be misunderstood, the Circular declared in its concluding sentence that "the Imperial

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Cabinet, in assuming this task, takes as its guide the interests of Russia."*

Such is the nature of the Manifesto which, it is pretended, held out a promise to Europe that Russian annexations and conquests in Central Asia were to cease for ever. It would be much nearer the truth to say, on the contrary, that it was a Manifesto rendering it certain that those conquests could not and would not be restrained. Yet public writers of the highest authority never speak of this document without that kind of misrepresentation which is the natural result of strong antipathies or of overmastering hobbies. Among these writers no one is more justly distinguished than Sir Henry Rawlinson. With unequalled knowledge of those regions, and with great powers of statement, he never loses an opportunity of insisting on the danger arising to us out of the advances of Russia in Central Asia. Yet whilst treating the subject much more ably than most other writers, and whilst trying to state fairly the physical and military necessities to which these advances are often due, he never refers to this Russian Manifesto without unconsciously misquoting it, and misinterpreting it. Thus in the Memorandum of 1869, he speaks of it as "asserting with categorical precision that the expansion of the Empire had now reached its limit." I look in vain in the Manifesto for any such declaration, or for

* Central Asia, No. II., 1873, pp. 72-5.

anything which is at all equivalent. It is true, indeed, that the Manifesto speaks of a military line which had then been established between Lake Issyk-Kaul and the Syr-Daria River (Jaxartes), as a line which had the advantage of "fixing for us with geographical precision the limit up to which we are bound to advance and at which we must halt." But the very next words demonstrate that the "must" in this sentence referred entirely to physical and political difficulties which the Russian Government were unwilling to encounter, but which they did by no means promise never to encounter, if by circumstances they should be led or forced to do so. On the contrary, the whole tone and the whole argument of the Manifesto is directed to reserve to the Russian Government perfect freedom for the future in her dealings with the States of Central Asia, and to emphasise with the greatest care the conditions which rendered it absolutely necessary that this freedom should be maintained.

Let us now look at the treatment which Russia has received at our hands in respect to later declarations, in their connexion with later conquests.

In 1869 rumours began to get abroad that the military activities of the Russian Government were likely soon to take the direction of Khiva. Towards the end of February in that year, our Ambassador at St. Petersburg had a conversation with the Emperor on the general subject of Central Asian politics, when the Emperor, whilst disclaiming any feeling of

coveteousness in those regions, took care to remind her Majesty's Government of their own experience in India, and to point out that the Russian position in Asia was "one of extreme difficulty, in which our actions may depend not so much upon our own wishes as upon the course pursued towards us by the Native States around us." Nothing could be clearer than this for the purpose of distinguishing between engagements or promises of any kind, and explanations or assurances of policy, of wishes, and of intentions. But if anything more clear on this subject were desired, it was not long before it was supplied. On the 31st of November, in the same year (1869), Sir Andrew Buchanan had another conversation with Prince Gortchakow on the rumoured expedition against Khiva, in which the Russian Minister gave expression to very strong assurances of his policy and intention against farther extensions of territory in Asia, and resting the departures which had taken place from former intentions of a like kind, on the force of circumstances. Our Ambassador reported this conversation in a despatch dated December 1, 1869.* But as more definite information soon reached him in regard to the formidable character of the Expedition which was said to be in contemplation, he returned to the charge with Prince Gortchakow on the 29th of December. He placed in the Prince's hands an extract from his despatch—

* Ibid., No. 21, p. 19.

reporting the previous conversation. The Prince read it with entire approval of its accuracy, but when he came to the passage that "he would not consent to an extension of the Empire" he stopped to observe and to explain that this "could only mean that he would disapprove of it, as he could not prevent such an eventuality, were the Emperor to decide in its favour."†

Under these circumstances, we have no excuse for the unfairness of representing the repeated intimations and assurances of Russia on this subject as meaning anything more than the Emperor and his Minister carefully explained them to mean. The unfairness is all the greater as we are generally guilty of it without the smallest reference to the question whether Russia had or had not a just ground of quarrel with the Khan of Khiva. Yet the case stated by Russia against the Khan, as reported by Sir A. Buchanan, is a case of indisputable justice, and even necessity. In June, 1871, Sir A. Buchanan explained that the principal object of Russia seemed to be "to secure a safe commercial route to Central Asia from the Caspian and her Trans-Caucasian provinces." This is in strict accordance with the declared policy of Russia in the manifesto of 1864. But more than this. The suppression and punishment of piracy on land is as just

† Ibid., No. 25, p. 22.

a cause of war as the suppression of piracy by sea. It is not denied that the Khan of Khiva was simply the ruler of robber tribes, and that he lived upon the revenues of plunder. But in addition to these just causes of quarrel the Russian Government asserted that he held Russian subjects in captivity and slavery. No attempt is made to deny or to refute this assertion.

I am informed by my relative, Sir John McNeill, that as long as forty years ago, when he represented the British Government at the Court of Persia, he had to use his endeavours to redeem from captivity in Khiva a number of Russian subjects. I am also informed by Lord Northbrook that the Khivan Envoy who came to him at Simla in 1873 confessed that the Khan was in possession of Russian captives. The assertion, therefore, of the Russian Government, that it had just cause of complaint against the Khan, has not only never been refuted, but is one which we know to be consistent with all the probabilities of the case. Yet we, a Nation and a Government which spent some eleven millions in redeeming from captivity in Abyssinia a few subjects of the Queen, are never tired of complaining that the Emperor of Russia for similar reasons and for other reasons quite as good, and of far more permanent value, sent a military expedition against Khiva, and finally reduced that Khanate to a condition under which it could rob no

more.* It is quite true that in 1873, Russia was induced by our persistent expressions of jealousy and remonstrance to repeat her assurances of intention, in words less guarded by express limitations than they had been before. These new assurances were given to Lord Granville on the 8th of January, 1873, by Count Schouvalow, when he was sent by the Emperor to London to communicate to the British Government his Majesty's assent to our long contention on the boundaries of Afghanistan. This was the main object of his mission ; and the new assurances of policy in respect to Khiva seem to have been volunteered as upon subjects not immediately connected with the principal matter in hand. But those assurances of policy and of intention, strong as they were in particular expressions, have, as usual, been habitually misrepresented. Count Schouvalow declared that "not only was it far from the intentions of the Emperor to take possession of Khiva, but positive orders had been prepared to prevent it, and directions given that the conditions imposed should be such as could not in any

* Sir Henry Rawlinson tells us that one of the consequences of the Russian conquest of Khiva was that the Khan lost his revenue from the outlying Turcoman tribes, "whose allegiance to him, never very willingly paid, has been further shattered by the abolition of the slave-trade in the Khiva market, and the consequent suppression of their means of livelihood."—*England and Russia in the East*, p. 330.

way lead to a prolonged occupancy of Khiva.”* These words, even if they were to be strictly construed as the record of a definite international engagement, which they certainly were not, would not prevent the subjugation of Khiva to the condition of a dependent State, nor would they prevent the annexation of some Khivan territory to the Russian Empire. It is probable that neither of these contingencies were then contemplated by the Emperor. But neither of them are definitely excluded by the terms of Count Schouvalow’s assurance. It is true that the general limitations which Russia had so often placed upon her assurances of intention in Central Asia, were not repeated by Count Schouvalow when he spoke of the Khivan Expedition. But most undue advantage is taken of this fact, when we forget that those limitations had always been explained to be inherent in the nature of the case, and that even if they had never been formally recorded, as they frequently had been, they ought to have been understood.

Accordingly, when in January, 1874, Lord Granville had to acknowledge the receipt of the Treaty with the Khan of Khiva which recorded the results of the Russian conquest, he very wisely declared that he saw no advantage in comparing those results with the “assurances of intention” which had been given by Count Schouvalow. Lord Granville carefully

* Corresp. with Russia, Central Asia, 1873, No. 3, p. 13.

avoided calling them promises. He gave to them the correct name, and he absolutely refrained from those accusations of bad faith in which irresponsible writers have so freely indulged.*

We have now brought the narrative of events, so far as our direct relations with Russia through the Foreign Office are concerned, down to the Khivan Expedition, and to her acknowledgment of our contention respecting the boundaries and respecting the political position of Afghanistan. We have also, in connexion with this subject, somewhat anticipated the parallel events which were taking place in India, by indicating the changed conditions of feeling under which Lord Lytton was sent out to India. But in order to understand clearly what was to follow, we must go back for a little to fill up the interval which elapsed between the Umballa Conference in 1869, and the violation of Lord Mayo's pledges which immediately followed when Lord Northbrook ceased to be the Viceroy of India, in April, 1876.

* Russia, II., 1874, No. 2, p. 7.

CHAPTER XV.

FROM THE AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA IN 1873 TO
THE FRERE NOTE IN JANUARY, 1875.

WE have seen the impression which Lord Mayo derived from the language of Shere Ali at Umballa,—that the Ameer thought very little and cared even less about the Russian advances in Central Asia. Yet this was at a time when Russia had just established her paramount influence over his nearest neighbour—a neighbour intimately connected with all the revolutions in his own country—a neighbour whose country had been, and still was, the habitual refuge of defeated candidates for his throne. But although Lord Mayo was fully justified in this impression, and although it was evident that the mind of the Ameer was engrossed by the contest in which he had been engaged, and which was not even then absolutely closed,—so that he thought of nothing so much as his desire for a dynastic guarantee,—it does not follow that he was ignorant of the place which Russian advances had in the policy of the English Government. It is a vain attempt to

conceal anything from Afghans as to the motives of our policy towards the Kingdom of Cabul. Even if it were our object to deceive them, it would be impossible. Their suspicions outrun every possibility of concealment. Accordingly, there is curious evidence that at the Umballa Conference Noor Mohammed, the trusted Minister of the Ameer, indicated a perfectly correct appreciation of the position of his country in its relation both to Russia and to England. At a meeting held on the 1st of April, 1869, he showed considerable suspicion about our professed eagerness to promote trade with Afghanistan. Mr. Seton Karr, the Foreign Secretary, and Major Pollock, the Commissioner, tried to reassure him. Noor Mohammed then said, "You have given us guns, treasure, &c. &c. You would not do so without some special motive. What is your motive?" The Foreign Secretary answered, "In order that the Government on our borders may be independent and strong, just as Cashmere and Khotul are;" explaining further what had been done in respect to the Cashmere succession. Upon this Noor Mohammed replied, apparently with some touch of fun, that he accepted the explanation, and "would not credit us with ulterior motives," and then added these significant words: "He hoped we should have a good understanding, and the advantage of it to us (the English) would be, that were the Russians or other enemy to come, even though the Afghans themselves could not successfully keep them

out of the country, they could harass them in every way.”*

The inference I draw from this remarkable observation of the Afghan Minister is that he was perfectly aware of the political object we had in view in supporting and strengthening the Afghan Kingdom, and that the indifference exhibited at that time both by him and by the Ameer on the subject of Russian advances, was due not only to the fact that they regarded foreign aggression as a distant danger, but also to the fact that they knew they could count on our own self-interest leading us to assist them if the danger should ever come nearer.

If, however, the mind of the Ameer had been under any anxiety on the subject of danger from Russia, that anxiety would have been removed by the information which Lord Mayo was able to communicate to him soon after the Umballa Conference—namely, the information that Russia had agreed to recognise, as belonging to Afghanistan, all the territories then in his actual possession. He had further, the friendly assurances of General Kaufmann, which Lord Mayo himself had taken the trouble of explaining to him as assurances with which the Viceroy was highly pleased. Further, he had the actual conduct of the Russian Governor-

* Notes of Umballa Conference enclosed in Lord Mayo's letter of April 4, 1869.

General in refusing to allow Abdul Rahman Khan to excite disturbances in Afghanistan, and also in arresting movements on the part of the Khan of Bokhara which compromised the peace of the Afghan frontier. On the other hand, Shere Ali himself had shown that he was fully aware of the condition on which our support was given to him, namely, the condition that he would abstain from aggression upon his neighbours, and especially on those immediate neighbours who were avowedly under the influence and protection of Russia. In compliance with this condition Shere Ali, under the influence and by the advice of the Government of India, had refrained from several frontier operations to which he would have been otherwise inclined, and in particular from annexing Kirkee and Charjui.* The Emperor of Russia had heartily acknowledged the good faith and the success with which the Government of India had been acting in this matter, and considered it as a gratifying proof of the good effects of the Agreement which had been arrived at between the two Powers in respect to their mutual relations in the East.

No occasion for any special communication with the Ameer arose during the rest of Lord Mayo's viceroyalty, which was terminated by his calamitous death in the spring of 1872, nor during the first year of the viceroyalty of his successor. Only one annoy-

* *Afghanistan*, I., 1878, No. 22, p. 105.

ance to the Ameer arose out of the policy of Lord Mayo, acting under the direction of the Government at home. There had been a long-standing dispute in respect to the boundaries of the Afghan and Persian Kingdoms in the province of Seistan. Lord Mayo, thinking that it might some day lead to complications, had readily agreed to a proposal that it should be settled by the arbitration of British officers, sent expressly to survey the country, and to adjust the line of frontier. The duty was assigned to, and was carefully executed by, General Sir F. Goldsmid, one of the ablest officers at the disposal of the Government of India, and having special qualifications for the service. General Sir Frederick Pollock lent his aid to Noor Mohammed, the Afghan Minister in watching the Afghan case. The decision was one which did not give to the Ameer all that he considered to be his own. The device of settling such matters by arbitration, although eminently reasonable in itself, is one not yet familiar to Asiatics, and not readily understood by them. They do not easily believe in the perfect impartiality of anybody, and it is natural that in such cases they should regard an adverse decision with mortification and distrust.

We now come to the transactions which led to the Conferences at Simla in 1873 between Lord Northbrook and the Prime Minister of the Ameer. As on these transactions both the *Simla Narrative* of Lord Lytton, and the *London Narrative* of Lord

Cranbrook, are little better than a mass of fiction, it will be necessary to state the facts accurately, and to confront them with those Narratives.

Early in March, 1873,* it became the duty of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to confirm the award which had been given in the Seistan Arbitration. Under the terms of the Arbitration this confirmation was final and binding, both on the Shah of Persia and on the Ameer of Cabul. It was well known how distasteful the result had been to the Ameer.

In connexion, therefore, with this Seistan Arbitration, and also in connexion with the final transactions between the Cabinets of London and St. Petersburg on the boundaries of Afghanistan, it became desirable, in the spring of 1873, that the Government of India should have some more direct communication than usual with the Ameer, Shere Ali. On both these subjects, but especially on the first, Lord Northbrook thought it would be expedient to give him personal explanations tending to soothe irritation or to prevent misunderstanding. For these purposes, Lord Northbrook, through a letter from the Commissioner of Peshawur, which reached Cabul on the 27th of March,† requested the Ameer to receive a British officer at

* Afghan Corresp., II., 1878, p. 4.

† Ibid., p. 5. Enclos. 2 in No. 2.

Cabul, or Jellalabad, or Candahar, or at any other place in Afghanistan which the Ameer might name—not, of course, as a resident Envoy, but on a special mission. True to the traditional policy of his family and race, the Ameer availed himself of the right which he had by Treaty and by the pledges of Lord Mayo, to intimate that he would prefer, in the first place at any rate, not to receive a British officer at Cabul, but to send his own Prime Minister to Simla. This reply was not given until the 14th of April, after long discussions in Durbar, at one of which the “Moonshee” of the British Agency was permitted to be present.* These debates showed great reluctance to abide by the Seistan award, and a disposition to use the Ameer’s assent as a price to be given only in return for certain advantages which he had long desired. They show that the Ameer was reluctant even to send an Envoy of his own, and that this measure was referred to as a concession on his part to the wishes of the Viceroy.† They showed also the usual jealousy and dread of the presence of a British Envoy in Cabul, and of the pressure he might put upon the Ameer to accept proposals which might be distasteful to him. In all this, however, Shere Ali was acting within his right—standing on the faith of Treaties, and on the pledges of Lord Mayo. The

* Ibid., Enclos. 5, p. 7.

† Ibid., Enclos. 5 and 6, pp. 7, 8.

Viceroy, therefore, true, on his side, to the engagements and to the wise policy of his predecessors, abstained from pressing his request upon the Ameer, and at once, on the 25th of April, accepted the alternative he preferred.*

Let us now see how these facts are dealt with in the Simla and in the London Narratives. It suited the purpose with which both these Narratives were drawn up to represent the Ameer as having been at this time greatly alarmed by the advances of Russia, because this representation of the case helps to throw blame on Lord Northbrook for having (as alleged) refused to reassure him. Of course the fact that the Ameer did not seek any Conference at this time, but, on the contrary, only consented to it rather reluctantly, when it was proposed to him by the Government of India—is a fact which stands much in the way of such a representation of the case. Accordingly, both in the Simla Narrative and in the London Narrative, this fact is entirely suppressed, whilst, both by implication and by direct assertion, the impression is conveyed that the Ameer sought the Conference,—that he did so under the fear of Russian advances in Central Asia, and for the purpose of getting securities against them. The Simla Narrative, after quoting passages from the Durbar debate above mentioned, which did refer to Russia,

* Ibid., Enclos. 8, p. 9.

proceeds thus (para. 12): "With these thoughts in his mind, his Highness deputed Synd Noor Mohammed Shah, in the summer of 1873, to wait upon Lord Northbrook, and submit this and other matters to the consideration of the Viceroy."*

It would be quite impossible to gather from this that it was the Viceroy who had desired to open special communications with the Ameer, and that Shere Ali only offered to send his Minister in order to avoid receiving a British Envoy. But the London Narrative improves upon its Simla prototype. It not only represents that the Ameer was moved to send his Minister from his fear of Russia, but it professes to tell us more exactly how that fear then specially arose. It was the fall of Khiva. "The capture of Khiva," says paragraph 8 of the London Narrative, "by the forces of the Czar, in the spring of 1873, and the total subordination of that Khanate to Russia, caused Shere Ali considerable alarm, &c. Actuated by his fears on this score, his Highness sent a special Envoy to Simla in the summer of that year, charged with the duty of expressing them to the Government of India."† Now it so happens, as we have seen, that the Ameer's proposal to send his Minister was made on the 14th of April, whilst the capture of Khiva did not take place till the 10th of June. Even if the Ameer had possessed the power of

* Ibid., p. 162.

† Ibid., p. 262.

seeing what was then going on at the distance of some 800 or 900 miles across the deserts of Central Asia, he would not have been much alarmed on account of Russian advances. On that very day, the 14th of April, Kaufmann and all his force were at the point of death from thirst and fatigue, in their advance on Khiva. They were saved only by the timely intervention of a "ragged Kirghiz," who led them to some wells. It was not till the 23rd of May, that Kaufmann reached the Oxus with only 1200 camels remaining out of the 10,000 with which the Expedition had been provided.* As for the "total subordination of the Khanate of Khiva to Russia," this was not effected till the date of the Treaty, which was not concluded till the 12th of August, and was not published at St. Petersburg till the 12th of December.† The statement, therefore, in the London Narrative, as to the circumstances which led to the Simla Conferences of 1873, is entirely misleading, and points to conclusions, in respect to the Ameer's motives, with which the real facts are entirely inconsistent. These facts must have been well known both at Calcutta and at the India Office, and they ought to have been correctly given.

The statement made both in the Simla and in the London Narrative as to the Ameer's condition of mind

* Schuyler's *Turkistan*, Vol. ii. p. 341.

† *Russia*, II., 1874., No. 2, p. 6.

when he sent his Minister, Noor Mohammed, to confer with the Viceroy, is a statement founded mainly on the reports of the Ameer's conversations with our native Agent at Cabul, and especially on those which were reported by that Agent on the 5th of May, 1873.* In the Simla Narrative (par. 11), some quotations are given from this Report of the language held by the Ameer; but these quotations are very partial, and avoid any reference to the most important passages which best indicate the opinions, the feelings, and the desires of the Ameer.

When we turn to the account given by our native Agent of the talk of the Ameer, it will be found that he referred, indeed, to the probability that Russia would soon take possession both of Khiva and of Merve, as one of the well-known sources of British anxiety and alarm. Any information he possessed about "the preparations for an advance of a Russian Army" seems to have been derived from "the English papers."† From this source apparently, he said that Merve would be taken by Russia "either in the current year or the next." This was over-shooting the mark indeed. But it shows what his mark was. It was his object and his game to work upon our alarm, and he dwelt upon the dangers of Russian aggression, as these had been long known, and long familiar to

* Ibid., No. 26, Inclos. 2, pp. 110, 111.

† Afghan Corresp., II., 1878, No. 2, Enclos. 3, p. 6.

the Ameer, ever since the Umballa Conference,—to which, strange to say, he expressly referred, as the starting-point of his communications with the Government of India upon the subject. Considering the impression of Lord Mayo that he did not then attach any importance to it, and considering that Viceroy's express statement to me that Russia was never mentioned except incidentally during the whole conferences, it becomes clear that in the preceding narrative I have not over-estimated the significance of the language—apparently incidental—which was held on the 1st of April, 1869, at Umballa, by Noor Mohammed, in reference to the real position of the Afghan Kingdom in the policy of the British Government. The whole language of Shere Ali in the first week of May, 1873, was simply an amplification of the language of his Minister on that occasion in April, 1869. Shere Ali knew that we should defend him against external aggression, not for his sake, but for our own. He indicated unmistakably that he put the same interpretation upon all our efforts on his behalf which Noor Mohammed had put upon our presents at Umballa of money and of guns. He even went the length of implying that the security of the Afghan border was more our affair than his. He declared that at the Umballa Conference he had said so to Lord Mayo, "exonerating himself from making arrangements for that security."* This conviction that our

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 26, Enclos. 2, p. 110.

fear of Russia, and our own interests in resisting her, had got for him all he had received, animates the whole of his conversation. He trades upon our fear of Russia as a means of getting more. In the handling of this subject he shows great intelligence, and a very considerable extent of information. It may be said that the whole literature of Anglo-Indian Russophobia seems to have been familiar to him. All the points common to that school of opinion are adroitly brought to bear. He refers to the Russian denunciation of the Black Sea clauses in the Treaty of 1856, and founds upon it the usual inferences about the slipperiness of Russian diplomacy. He excites our jealousy about Merve as an approach to Herat, and he uses this jealousy to denounce our approval of the Seistan Arbitration. He rather sneers at the long difficulty which had arisen with Russia about the definition of the northern boundaries of his Kingdom, and says, "he was at a loss to surmise" what that difficulty was. He warns us that very soon the Russians would make communications which would exercise some influence in his country. Alternating with these stimulants to our fears and to our jealousy, he holds out certain promises based upon his estimate of our policy, and that estimate he explains to be, "that the border of Afghanistan is in truth the border of India." And again, that the "interests of the Afghan and English Governments are identical." Counting on the efficacy of these motives, heated to red heat

by his warnings and exhortations, he expected us to give him "great assistance in money and in ammunition of war," and "great aid for the construction of strong forts throughout the Afghan northern border." But more than this. These anxieties for a frontier which was "also ours" were associated with other anxieties about himself personally. Domestic troubles were never out of his mind; and his old demand for a dynastic guarantee betrays itself with little disguise. But feeling also that he wanted some personal security in the event of misfortune, "it was rather advisable," he said, "that the British Government, for its own and for his satisfaction, should set apart some property, either in India or in Europe, for his support, that he might retire there with his family and children, and find both accommodation and maintenance there." Finally, he expresses a wish that we should "commence forthwith to organise the Afghan troops, and to send from time to time large amounts of money with great numbers of guns and magazine stores, in order that he might steadily be able in a few years to satisfactorily strengthen the Afghan Kingdom."*

Such is the condition of mind and such the conversation on the part of the Ameer, which is represented in the Simla and London Narratives as indicating on the part of Shere Ali a sincere alarm on account of the advances of Russia, and an anxiety

* Ibid. p. iii.

to be reassured by fresh promises supplementary to those which had been already given. This representation of the conversation of the Ameer seems to me obviously erroneous. It is a conversation, on the contrary, which demonstrated that Shere Ali relied absolutely on our own sense of self-interest as our inducement to defend his Kingdom, and that he entertained an overweening confidence in his power of working on this motive to get out of us almost anything he wished to ask.

The inconvenience of this condition of affairs lay in the fact that the Ameer's estimate of our position and of our policy was substantially correct. He was right in thinking that our interest in Afghanistan was an interest of our own. It was perfectly natural that he should count upon this, and that he should desire to discount it also to the largest possible extent.

Although the particular conversation of May was not known to us at the India Office in the spring and summer of 1873, we did know quite enough to make us sure that the Ameer of Cabul had been aware, ever since the Umballa Conference, that we considered it part of our Indian Policy to maintain the "integrity and independence" of Afghanistan. The whole course of negotiations since, and our repeated communications both to him and to the Russian Government, had made this clearly understood between all the parties concerned. General Kauf-

mann had formally addressed the Ameer as a Prince under British protection, and two successive Viceroy's had approved the letters and communications between the Ameer and Russian authorities in which this relation was assumed. We knew that the Ameer was disposed to make this acknowledged policy of the British Government the ground and the plea for making demands upon us which it would have been very unwise to grant,—the risk of which had been indicated by sad experience,—and the impolicy of which had been denounced at a later period by the detailed arguments of Lord Lawrence and of Lord Mayo.

It was under these circumstances that Lord Northbrook, in anticipation of the approaching Conference with Noor Mohammed, telegraphed to me that he proposed to inform the Cabul Envoy of the sense of a paragraph in a despatch which had not then reached me. It was a despatch summing up the results of the long negotiations with Russia which had then been concluded, and its 18th paragraph was devoted to setting forth the fundamental principle of that negotiation, that the "complete independence of Afghanistan was so important to the interests of British India, that the Government of India could not look upon an attack on Afghanistan with indifference." It added that "so long as the Ameer continued, as he had hitherto done, to act in accordance with our advice in his relations with his neighbours, he would

naturally receive material assistance from us, and that circumstances might occur under which we should consider it incumbent upon us to recommend the Indian Government to render him such assistance."* This was the paragraph, of which Lord Northbrook proposed, by telegraph on the 27th of June, to communicate the sense to the Envoy of the Ameer.†

It did not appear to me at the time that this proposed communication to the Ameer would be of much value. In its terms, carefully guarded as they were, it seemed to contain nothing that the Ameer did not know before, and indeed to fall greatly short of the interpretation he had shown signs of putting upon the assurances already given to him. Having, however, the greatest confidence in the discretion of the Viceroy, I contented myself with replying, by telegraph on the 1st of July, that, whilst I did not object to the general sense of the paragraph as a fitting "communication to Russia from the Foreign Office," I considered that "great caution was necessary in assuring the Ameer of material assistance which might raise undue and unfounded expectation." I added, "He already shows symptoms of claiming more than we may wish to give."‡

Accordingly when, eleven days after this telegram had been sent, the Conferences with the Cabul Envoy

* *Afghanistan*, I., 1878, No. 21, p. 102.

† *Ibid.*, No. 21, p. 102. ‡ *Ibid.*, No. 23, p. 108.

began at Simla, Lord Northbrook found that his first business was to disabuse the mind of the Afghan Minister of the extravagant and unwarrantable interpretations which he and the Cabul Durbar were disposed to entertain. Instead of under-estimating, they immensely over-estimated the sweep and bearing of the friendly assurances which had been given to them by Lord Lawrence and by Lord Mayo. They spoke as if the British Government "had bound itself to comply with any request preferred by the Ameer." This is the account given by Lord Northbrook himself in his subsequent account of the Simla Conferences.*

It will be seen that Lord Northbrook found himself very much in the same position as that in which Lord Mayo had found himself at Umballa in 1869. That is to say, he found himself in the presence of extravagant expectations, and of demands which it was impossible for him to concede. The Viceroy pursued the same wise course which, under similar circumstances, had been pursued by his predecessor. He determined to offer the Ameer everything that could be reasonably given, but resolutely to maintain the freedom of the British Government to judge of every contingency as it might arise.

The first formal Conference with the Minister of the Ameer took place on the 12th of July. At this

* Ibid., No. 26, p. 109.

meeting the Viceroy explained fully to the Envoy the terms and the effect of the final Agreement between England and Russia as to the boundaries of Afghanistan, and the effect it had in giving practical force and definite meaning to the long-standing Agreement that the Kingdom of Cabul was to be outside the sphere of Russian influence in Asia. He told the Afghan Minister that "the British Government would be prepared to use their best endeavours to maintain the frontier intact, so long as the Ameer or the Ruler of Afghanistan followed their advice as regards his external relations, and abstained from encroachments upon his neighbours." Again, somewhat more definitely, the Viceroy told him that "in the event of any aggression from without, if British influence were invoked, and failed by negotiation to effect a satisfactory settlement, it was probable that the British Government would in that case afford the Ruler of Afghanistan material assistance in repelling an invader." The Envoy declared that the "rapid advances made by the Russians in Central Asia had aroused the gravest apprehensions in the minds of the people of Afghanistan," who "could place no confidence in them, and would never rest satisfied unless they were assured of the aid of the British Government." The further discussion of the subject was reserved for another day.*

* Ibid., No. 26, Inclos. 4, p. 112.

It now appeared to Lord Northbrook that whatever might be the real aims or motives of the Cabul Envoy in giving expression to these fears of Russia, and in asking for further engagements on the part of the British Government, it would be possible with safety to give a somewhat fuller, and more definite, expression to the settled policy of the Government than had been given in Lord Mayo's letter of 1869, or in any subsequent formal communications. Under this impression, twelve days after the first Conference with the Envoy, and six days before the next, he telegraphed to me on the 24th of July that the Ameer of Cabul was alarmed at Russian progress, was dissatisfied with general assurances, and was anxious to know definitely how far he could rely on our help if invaded. The Viceroy proposed to "assure him that if he unreservedly accepted and acted on our advice in all external relations, we would help him with money, arms, and troops, if necessary, to expel unprovoked invasion. We to be the judge of the necessity."* To this I replied on the 26th, after consulting the Cabinet, that we thought the Viceroy should "inform the Ameer that we did not at all share his alarm, and considered there was no cause for it ; but that he might assure him we should maintain our settled policy in favour of Afghanistan, if he abided by our advice in external affairs."† The Viceroy interpreted this reply as we

* Ibid., No. 24, p. 108.

† Ibid., No. 25, p. 108.

intended him to interpret it—namely, as sanctioning his proposed communication to the Envoy, but with the important preliminary declaration that we did not share in those fears, or alleged fears, of Russian aggression, on which he and his master seemed disposed to found the most unreasonable and extravagant expectations.

At the next Conference, on the 30th of July, Lord Northbrook soon found that all our caution and his own were fully needed. He found the Afghan Minister under the impression that the British Government were already “pledged to comply with any request for assistance preferred by the Ameer.” The language of Noor Mohammed seems to have been almost a repetition of the Ameer’s absurd talk to our native Agent at Cabul early in May. He wanted supplies of money and of arms. He pretended that the army he had already raised had been so raised on the faith of the promises of Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo. He demanded that the British Government, besides promising to assist the Ameer with money and with arms, according to the circumstances of the case, should also engage to have an army at his disposal, to be sent in at his request, to take whatever route he might require,* and to be immediately sent out again when it had done his work for him. No concessions towards the British Government were

* Lord Northbrook’s Memorandum, para. 18.

offered on behalf of the Ameer in return for these demands—no proposal that it should enjoy greater powers of control, or even larger opportunities of observation. No offer was made to receive Envoys, or to let go the hold of the Ameer on Lord Mayo's pledge on the subject of British officers.*

Such were the modest and reasonable demands, made by Noor Mohammed, and urged upon the Viceroy by all those appeals to our fear and to our jealousy of Russia in which, doubtless, he had been well instructed by the Anglo-Indian press.

It was indeed high time to give some intimation to the Ameer in the sense of the message from the Cabinet. It was important to let him understand that we were not quite so timorous as he supposed, and to remind him that at the close of a long and difficult negotiation, during which Russia had behaved with entire good faith towards him and towards ourselves, we did not consider him justified in the pleas he put forward for unlimited demands upon us.

On the other hand, not to deal too seriously with the natural and transparent devices of the Ameer, the Viceroy determined to give to Noor Mohammed the fuller and more definite assurance which he had sought and had obtained our permission to give. Accordingly, on the 30th of July, Lord Northbrook, after having explained to the Envoy that

* *Afghan Corresp.*, I., 1878, No. 26, Inclos. 5, pp. 112, 113.

the British Government did not share the Ameer's apprehensions in respect to Russia, informed him that in the event of any actual or threatened aggression, it would be his duty to refer the question to the British Government, who would endeavour by negotiation and by every means in their power to settle the matter and avert hostilities. Should these endeavours to bring about an amicable settlement prove fruitless, Lord Northbrook gave the formal pledge that the British Government "were prepared to assure the Ameer that they would afford him assistance in the shape of arms and money, and would also, in case of necessity, aid him with troops."*

It will be observed that in this assurance the qualifying word "probably," which had been used before, was intentionally omitted. Besides this very definite assurance for the future, a present supply of ten lacs of rupees, besides five lacs more to be spent in arms, were placed at the disposal of the Ameer. Moreover, further discussion was by no means refused on the large and vague demands made by the Ameer in reference to the frontier defences of Afghanistan. The subject was one of great importance, and must necessarily involve many conditions on our part. But the Envoy manifested doubt how far his instructions justified him in committing himself to any definite arrangement. It is,

* Ibid., p. 114.

indeed, evident from the debate in the Cabul Durbar, which had been reported by our native Agent in April, that the Ameer had sent his Minister mainly to find out what we had to tell him, and how much he could get out of us, but with no instructions or authority to offer anything on his own part. Mr. Aitchison, who was Foreign Secretary to the Government of India at that time, and who conducted the Conferences with Noor Mohammed, has informed Lord Northbrook in a recent letter (dated Dec. 11, 1878) that the Afghan Envoy led him to believe that his master would not receive British officers as residents in his Kingdom, even in consideration of a guarantee that we should defend Afghanistan as we should defend British territory. Mr. Aitchison adds that Noor Mohammed had no instructions even to discuss such a subject with the Viceroy. Lord Northbrook, under these circumstances, had no other course open to him than to postpone the settlement of any further questions to a more favourable opportunity.*

Such are the transactions of which, in the London Narrative, the Government have presented the following as a truthful account :—

Paragraph 8.—“The capture of Khiva by the forces of the Czar in the spring of 1873, and the total subordination of that Khanate to Russia, caused Shere Ali considerable alarm, and led him to question

* Ibid., No. 26, p. 109.

the value of the pledges with reference to Afghanistan which had been given by his Imperial Majesty, and which had been communicated to his Highness by the British Government, actuated by his fears on this score. His Highness sent a special Envoy to Simla in the summer of that year, charged with the duty of expressing them to the Government of India."

Paragraph 9.—"Finding that the object of the Ameer was to ascertain definitely how far he might rely on the help of the British Government if his territories were threatened by Russia, Lord Northbrook's Government was prepared to assure him that, under certain conditions, the Government of India would assist him to repel unprovoked aggression. But her Majesty's Government did not share his Highness's apprehension, and the Viceroy ultimately informed the Ameer that the discussion of the question would be best postponed to a more convenient season."

It will be seen that this statement of the facts is erroneous in everything except in a few particulars. Like one of those specimens of quartz in which no gold is visible, but which is rich in the uniform diffusion of the precious metal, this narrative presents no actual misstatement to the eye, but is permeated with misrepresentation throughout its substance. It purports to set forth the circumstances which led Shere Ali to send his Minister to meet Lord Northbrook. It purports to give us the reply of the Government at home to a message from the Viceroy. It purports to

tell us what the action of the Viceroy was when he received that message. It purports to explain why certain parts of the discussion were postponed to another time. Of every one of these things it gives a wrong account. It is not true, as is implied, that the Ameer sent his Envoy because he was alarmed by the Russian conquest of Khiva. It is not true that the Government reply to Lord Northbrook's message consisted of a disclaimer of the alleged apprehensions of the Ameer. It is not true that the Viceroy was prevented by that message from giving to Shere Ali the assurance which he had asked leave to give. It is not true that the final postponement of certain questions stood in the connexion in which it is presented.

But such mere negations do not at all exhaust the wealth of these famous paragraphs in the peculiar characteristics for which they have acquired a just celebrity. There is in them a perfect union between the two great elements of all erroneous representation—namely, the suppression of things which are important facts, and the suggestion of things which are not facts at all. The ingenuity of the composition is a study. In the minuteness of the touches by which an immense breadth of effect is produced, we recognise the hand of a master. The introduction of the single word “but” just at the proper place, does great service. It suggests opposition and antagonism where there was none; and like the action of a pointsman

upon a railway, it turns off all the following train of facts into the track which is desired. Some of the devices, however, are rather gross. For example, the quotation of one half of a telegraphic message, and the suppression of the other half, exhibits more recklessness than skill. In like manner the total suppression of the fact that the Viceroy gave any assurances at all to the Ameer, is an expedient similar in kind. Perhaps it was too much to expect that the authors of the London Narrative should have pointed out the difference between the assurance which Lord Northbrook gave on the 12th of July, before he had asked and received fresh authority from the Government, and the much more unqualified assurance which he gave on the 24th after he had received that authority. This is one of the facts which is of the highest importance in itself and in its bearings. It is one which could not have been omitted by an historian of those facts who was careful and conscientious in his account of them. It might, however, be easily overlooked by a careless reader, or by a heated partisan. But to omit in a narrative which professes to give an account of these transactions, any notice whatever of the fact that the Viceroy did give some assurances to the Ameer in the sense in which he had desired to give them, is to be guilty of an unpardonable suppression of the truth. In like manner the statement that Lord Northbrook postponed certain discussions on the conditions to be attached to our

support of the Ameer, and to conceal the fact that this postponement arose out of the circumstance that the Envoy doubted his own authority to agree to any conditions at all, is another very wide departure from historical fidelity. Finally, the phrase selected to express the mind in which the Viceroy resorted to this postponement—the “convenient season” which carries us back to the words of Felix—is an unmistakable indication of the *animus* of the whole.

So far from Lord Northbrook having gratuitously postponed further discussion with the Ameer on the defences of his frontier to a “more convenient season,” he expressed in his official despatch his “trust that the matter might be discussed with the Ameer in person.”* With reference to some important frontier questions, the Envoy was charged on his return to his master with a Memorandum, in which it was suggested that a British officer of rank, with a competent staff, should be sent to examine thoroughly the Northern and North-Western frontiers of Afghanistan, and then should confer personally with the Ameer regarding the condition of the border, and might submit the opinions he had formed on the whole question of the defences of his frontier.† In forwarding this proposal to me, Lord Northbrook explained that although the

* Ibid., No. 26, p. 109.

† Ibid., No. 26, Inclos. 6, p. 115.

Government of India thought that the presence of accredited British officers at Cabul, Herat, and possibly also at Candahar, would for many reasons be desirable, they were fully alive to the difficulties in the way of such a measure, until the objects and policy of the British Government were more clearly understood and appreciated in Afghanistan. It was possible that some of those difficulties might be removed by personal communication.

We have seen that in the private and confidential conversations which had taken place at Simla with Noor Mohammed, this subject had been broached. A very large amount of respect seems to me to be due to that Minister from the accounts we have of his conduct on these occasions. He seems to me to have put the very unreasonable demands of the Ameer in the least unreasonable aspect which could be given to them, and to have uniformly explained his own views with truth and candour. In this matter of the mission of British officers his language was that, "speaking as a friend, and in the interests both of his own and of the British Government, he could not recommend that a specific request should be preferred to the Ameer for British officers to be stationed at certain given places." To this measure it is evident that the Ameer's objections still continued to be insuperable, and as he knew or suspected that special Envoys would probably enter upon the subject, and urge upon him a change of

policy, his objection very rationally extended even to such temporary missions. On the other hand, the Government of India knew its own pledges, and was determined to fulfil its promises. To put upon the Ameer any pressure upon this subject would have been an unquestionable breach of these. Shere Ali did not respond to the proposal of Lord Northbrook, and it necessarily fell through in consequence. There was nothing new in this—nothing in the least suspicious. Shere Ali simply continued in the same mind upon this question in which Lord Mayo found him at Umballa, and Lord Northbrook respected the pledges which had been given there.

On the 13th of November the Ameer replied to the Viceroy's letter of the 15th of September. It is undoubtedly rather a sulky letter. But much allowance ought to be made for the position of the Ameer. Considering the expectations which we have seen that he entertained,—considering the immense and unconditional advantages which he had expected to extract from us by playing on our fear of Russia,—considering too, the deep mortification with which he evidently regarded the Seistan arbitration, it is not surprising that he should have expressed dissatisfaction. After all, he only intimated that if he was to get no more than Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo had given him, it was useless to send Noor Mohammed to Simla. He had got something more in an assurance which was more

distinct. But as compared with what he wanted, the difference may have been inappreciable to him. He showed his irritation also by the terms in which he declined to allow a British officer to pass through his dominions. He showed, likewise, another feeling,—that of suspicion, by not taking possession of the sum of money which the Viceroy placed at his disposal. There is the best reason to believe that the cause of this was that he suspected the money to be the price of some renewed proposal to send British officers into his country. He accepted the arms at once, because he had no such fear in respect to them. Under all these circumstances his dissatisfaction was not unnatural. But in spite of it all, in his letter of the 13th November the Ameer fell back with confidence on the written pledges which he held from Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo. "The understanding arrived at in Umballa was quite sufficient"—a significant observation, which probably referred to the revival of the question about British officers. "As long as the beneficent British Government continued its friendship, we might be assured of his."*

The Viceroy's answer to this effusion, which was dated January 23rd, 1874, was the model of what such an answer ought to be, from a powerful Government to a semi-barbarous Sovereign, whose irritation

* Ibid., No. 28, Inclos. 1, p. 119.

was under the circumstances not unnatural,—whom it was inexpedient to offend, and undignified to bully Lord Northbrook expressed regret that the Ameer had not favoured him with an expression of his views on the proposals made in the Viceroy's former letter. Passing from this, he reminded Shere Ali that the assurances of support he had just given at Simla were "even more explicit than those contained in the auspicious writings of Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo." He reproached the Ameer gently—not for refusing a passage through his dominions to the British officer for whom the leave had been asked, but—for the want of courtesy with which this refusal had been marked in the absence of any expression of regret. The letter concluded by a cordial sympathising assurance that the difficulties of his position in receiving guests in Afghanistan was fully understood, as well as the more important political anxieties by which he was beset.*

This letter drew from the Ameer a remarkable reply. It was dated the 10th of April, 1874. It was much more courteous in tone. It gave a reasonable excuse for objecting to the return of Mr. Forsyth from Yarkand through Afghanistan, on the ground that he was about to commence hostilities against his son Yakoob Khan. But the most important paragraph seems to be one in which he again refers to the cherished

* Ibid., No. 28, Inclos. 2, p. 120.

memories of Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo. It is evident that his fears and suspicions had been deeply stirred by the renewed discussion about the reception of British officers, even although the Government of India had carefully abstained from doing more than suggesting a mission in response to what seemed to be one of his own requirements. His language of appeal to the authority and to the promises of his old friends is almost passionate. "Your Excellency! Since Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo, especially the former, possessed an intimate knowledge of Afghanistan and its frontiers, and your Excellency must certainly have also acquired the same knowledge, I, therefore, am desirous that your Excellency, after full and careful consideration of the approval expressed by her Majesty the Queen, the 'Sunnud' of Lord Lawrence, and the decision of Lord Mayo, will remain firm and constant, in order that Afghanistan and its territories may be maintained inviolate and secure."*

About three months after the Simla Conferences Shere Ali at last announced to the Government of India that he had appointed Abdoolah Jan his Heir-apparent. He had come to this resolution, as of course he had a perfect right to do, without taking any counsel or advice from the British Government. Yet that Government knew that a decision which set aside Yakooob Khan, to whom the Ameer was mainly

* Ibid., No. 29, Inclos. 1, p. 123.

indebted for the recovery of his throne, was a decision which in all human probability doomed the country to another disputed succession, and to another bloody civil war. Lord Northbrook therefore sent a letter of acknowledgment, strictly confined to the language which had been used in 1858 in reply to Dost Mohammed, when he intimated the selection of Shere Ali in supercession of his elder brother.*

In November, 1874, the Viceroy had to make a communication to the Ameer which, though a real proof of friendship, could not fail to disturb him much. Shere Ali had invited his son Yakoob Khan to come under a "safe conduct" to Cabul: and when the Sirdar came, on the faith of the safe conduct, it had been violated, and he had been placed under arrest. It appeared to Lord Northbrook, as it had before appeared under less serious circumstances to Lord Mayo, that this was a matter on which it was right and necessary to express the friendly opinion of the head of the Indian Government. This opinion was communicated to the Ameer by our native Agent at Cabul. It urged upon him strongly to keep faith with his son, and added that by so doing he would maintain his own good name, and the friendship of the British Government.† Although this message from the Viceroy was afterwards referred to as having offended the

* Ibid., No. 27, p. 117.

† Ibid., No. 30, Inclos. 5, p. 126.

Ameer, he sent on the 14th December, 1874, through our Agent at Cabul, a civil answer, and acknowledged the advice given to him as dictated by "friendship and well-wishing."

In February, 1874, there was a change of Government at home. Subsequent to this date I have, of course, no personal knowledge of the course of Indian affairs. But as in the preceding narrative, subsequent to the Umballa Conference in 1869, I have relied exclusively on the papers presented to Parliament, or on papers equally authentic, so now for the period subsequent to February, 1874, I shall follow the indications of a change of policy as they are to be found there.

In the first place, then, it is to be observed that the present Government had been very nearly a year in office before any such indications were given. The Government came into office in February, 1874, and the first despatch of Lord Salisbury, desiring the Government of India to reopen the question of British officers as Political Agents in Afghanistan, was dated January 22nd, 1875.†

Before examining the terms of that despatch it is natural to look round us and see whether any, and if any, what events had happened during the year from February, 1874, to January 22, 1875.

* Ibid., No. 30A, Inclos. 2, p. 128.

† Ibid., No. 31, p. 128.

Just before the late Government left office, Lord Granville was called upon to reply to the Russian announcement of the Khivan Treaty. He did so in a despatch dated January 4, 1874. It recapitulated, in significant but friendly terms, the oft-repeated story of the Russian advances in Central Asia, acknowledged the good faith with which Russia had acted on the Agreement about Afghanistan since it had been concluded, set forth that the Ameer had equally acted on our advice in restraining Turkomans, and intimated that Shere Ali was then again disturbed by rumours of a Russian expedition against Merve. Lord Granville then repeated the declaration that we looked upon the independence of Afghanistan as a matter of great importance to the security of British India, and to the tranquillity of Asia. If Russia, by any new expedition, were to drive the Turkomans into the Ameer's dominions, he might labour under a double hardship, first in the disturbance of his dominions, and secondly in being held responsible for the control of those wild tribes.*

To this the Russian Government replied on the 21st of January, 1874, that they remained as faithful as ever to the old Agreement. It repeated the assurance that the Imperial Cabinet "continued to consider Afghanistan as entirely beyond its sphere of action." But here the Russian Cabinet stopped. They would

* Russia, II. 1874, No 2, pp. 6, 9.

not import into that Agreement a new and a different line of limitation than that of the Afghan frontier. This was what they had agreed to, and by this they would abide. They declared, indeed, that Shere Ali's fear of an expedition against Merve was groundless, inasmuch as they "had no intention of undertaking an expedition against the Turkomans." But, warned apparently by accusations of bad faith, founded on the assumption that intimations of intention or denials of intention, are equivalent to pledges, Prince Gortchakow, in this despatch, took care to add that he spoke of nothing but a simple intention. "It depended entirely on them (the Turkomans) to live on good terms with us . . . but if these turbulent tribes were to take to attacking or plundering us, we should be compelled to punish them. Russia would rely on the Ameer to warn the Turkomans not to expect protection from him, and she would rely also on the influence of the English Government to give him effective advice upon the subject."* There was at least no deception in this despatch. Russia kept her freedom. Her Agreement had regard to Afghanistan, and not to anything beyond it. It concluded by saying that the "two Governments had an equal interest in not allowing their good relations to be disturbed by the intrigues of Asiatic Khans, and that so long as they

* Ibid., No. 3, pp. 10, 11.

both acted together with a feeling of mutual confidence and good will, the tranquillity of Central Asia would be sufficiently guaranteed."

Such was the condition of things when the present Government came into office. It was a condition of things in which Russia had given ample notice, that while she held by the engagement with us on the subject of Afghanistan, she would not extend it to any part of Central Asia outside that Kingdom, and in particular, that she held herself free to deal, as occasion might require, with the predatory Turkomans, whether in Merve or elsewhere. In March, 1874, however, Prince Gortchakow directed Baron Brünow to assure Lord Derby that the Emperor had given positive orders to stop any expedition against the Turkomans in the direction of Merve. This was expressly said in connexion with the approaching visit of the Emperor to England, and appears to have been a sort of condescension to a national weakness, "so that no cloud might be on the political horizon during his august master's visit to London."* In June, 1874, the Russian Government had its turn of asking us whether certain reports were true of our giving aid to the ruler of Yarkand, and this was categorically denied by the Viceroy.

Nevertheless, at this very time, the vigilance of our diplomatists had discovered a fresh cause of

* Central Asia, I., 1878, No. 9, p. 12.

anxiety in the reported proceedings of a General Llamakin, who was the newly-appointed Governor of the Russian Provinces on the Caspian (Krasnovodsk). On the 23rd of June, 1874, our Ambassador at St. Petersburg had heard that this functionary had addressed a Circular Letter to the Turkoman tribes of the Attrek and Goorgan Rivers, giving them warnings and advice. An account of this letter had appeared in the *Times* of the 17th of June, which pointed out that the Turkomans thus addressed were tribes which "nomadised" between the Caspian and the fort of Karis, "the latter being half-way to Merve." The same account mentioned as a fact that several Russian caravans had been recently plundered by the Turkomans of Merve, and that a Russian soldier was kept in captivity there. The despatch from Lord Augustus Loftus reporting the explanations given to him on these matters, was dated the 23rd, and was received in London on the 29th of June.* No anxiety, however, seems to have been expressed upon the subject, either by the Foreign Office or by the India Office. A month later, on the 2nd of August, a copy of the Circular Letter of General Llamakin was received at the Foreign Office from our Envoy at the Court of Persia.† He explained that he was informed on good authority that this Circular had been addressed to the whole of the

* Ibid., No. 18, p. 18.

† Ibid., No. 20, p. 19.

Turkoman tribes occupying the line of country between the Caspian, Merve, and Charjui on the Oxus. The Circular itself does not say so, but as the roving tribes of those regions have no fixed limits to their wanderings, it was probable that it was addressed to "all whom it might concern." Expressly, however, it seems to be addressed to the Turkomans on "the Attrek and Goorgan," this being the area over which the General intimated that he had "supreme authority." It was simply an elaborate warning against the plundering of caravans, an exhortation to peace, and a recommendation of the benefits of commerce. It implies, indeed, throughout, the assertion of supremacy, and of the power and will to enforce obedience.

Again, no notice was taken of this more definite information either by the Foreign Secretary or the Indian Secretary of State. It does not seem to have occurred to either of them that the Circular of General Llamakin could form the subject of remonstrance or even of inquiry. It was not until it had gone round by way of Calcutta that anything appears to have occurred to anybody on the subject. But the Indian Government, habitually wakeful and susceptible on Central Asian politics, took alarm. On the 8th of September, Lord Northbrook wrote a despatch to Lord Salisbury, pointing out that if the Circular sent by Mr. Thomson, from Teheran, were genuine, "the Persian territory between the Attrek and the Goorgan

is now practically annexed to the Russian dominions, and authority is assumed in respect to the whole Turkoman country to the borders of Afghanistan." The Government of India added—"We are of opinion that these proceedings cannot fail to excite uneasiness and alarm in the minds of our Persian and Afghan allies, and that they demand the serious attention of her Majesty's Government."*

This despatch from Lord Northbrook did not reach London till the 30th of October, and was at once formally referred to the Foreign Office "for the information and consideration of Lord Derby."

The Foreign Secretary was then awakened to the fact, of which no previous notice had been taken, that the Circular of General Llamakin, in styling himself "Commander of the Turkoman tribes of the Attrek and the Goorgan," involved an assumption of Russian Sovereignty over a country which had always been considered to belong to Persia. If this was so, it ought not to have been left to Lord Northbrook to point it out. It was no matter of rumour, or of constructive inference. It was on the face of the document. Yet it was not until it had been three months in possession of the Foreign Office, and not until the Government of India had fastened on the point, that the Government awoke to it as a fact of any significance whatever. It was only on

* Ibid., No. 21, p. 20.

the 6th of November, that Lord Derby directed Lord Augustus Loftus to point out to the Russian Chancellor that the "territory between the Attrek and the Goorgan was unquestionably Persian territory, in which General Llamakin would not be justified in interfering." Finally, he was instructed to "express a hope that the Government of the Emperor would impress upon General Llamakin the expediency of abstaining from molesting the tribes who frequent the country to the south of the Attrek."*

When this despatch reached St. Petersburg, on the 14th December, 1874, it led to a little sparring between the British Ambassador and M. de Westmann, who was the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs in the absence of Prince Gortchakow. M. de Westmann very naturally observed, that if Russia had done any wrong to Persia it was the business of Persia, and not of England, to complain. He did not refuse to explain that there had been a correspondence between the Imperial Persian Government on the subject, and that the explanations offered by Russia had been perfectly satisfactory to the Shah. Nor did M. de Westmann deny that the Circular of General Llamakin had given to the tribes he addressed a name or description which was liable to misapprehension. But he gave the not unreasonable explanation that the Turkoman tribes referred to, though they might generally inhabit

* Ibid., No. 22, p. 20.

territories which were Persian, were also in the habit of dwelling for a part of the year in territories which were Russian. He repeated, however, that although he gave these explanations, "it was not customary to interfere in the international relations of two independent States." To this Lord Augustus Loftus replied that the interests of the neighbouring States were more or less mixed up with those of our Indian Empire, and both Persia and Afghanistan might be considered as "limitrophe States to India." He added, "that the integrity of Persian territory had been the subject of a formal understanding and agreement between England and Russia in 1835 and 1838." M. de Westmann rejoined that this understanding had reference to the succession to the Persian throne, a subject on which he hoped the two Governments would always be able to come to a common understanding. But the incident now referred to by the British Ambassador was one affecting Persia alone, in which he could not admit the right of a third party to interfere. All this, however, was reported by our Ambassador as having been said in the most courteous and conciliatory manner.* Lord Derby replied to it by desiring Lord Augustus to point out to M. de Westmann that he was mistaken in saying that the agreement, in 1835 and 1838, referred only to the succession

* Ibid., No. 23, p. 21-2.

to the Persian throne,* and on this representation being made, M. de Westmann at once said that he had not meant to deny the validity of that understanding at the present moment. He denied, however, that the integrity of Persia had been menaced by General Llamakin's Circular any more than it had been menaced by the Seistan Arbitration—a matter which concerned Persian territory, but on which England had made no communication whatever to the Government of Russia.†

I have given this episode somewhat at length, because we shall see some reason to believe that the Proclamation of General Llamakin to the Turcoman Tribes “between the Attrek and the Goorgan” was one of the circumstances which started the Government on its new line of policy in India, and because it explains the condition of things down to the end of the year 1874—the last despatch of our Ambassador concerning it having been dated December 23rd in that year. It contains a record of transactions which prove that the Government at home had no need to call the attention of the Indian Viceroy to any part of the Central Asian question. Lord Northbrook and his Council had shown himself far more wakeful than either the Foreign or the Indian Secretary of State, and had exercised a vigilance in respect to the most distant frontiers of Persia, which did not appear in the despatches even of our Envoy at Teheran.

* Ibid., No. 24, p. 22.

† Ibid., No. 25, p. 23.

It was towards the end of these occurrences that an important event happened. Sir Bartle Frere wrote a Note. It was dated the 11th of January, 1875, and as it has since been published by the Government in the *Times* of November 14, 1878, in anticipation of the late session of Parliament, it cannot be doubted that it represents, to a considerable extent at least, the arguments which had weight with the Cabinet in the action which we are now about to trace. The Rawlinson Memorandum, written in a similar sense, which had been drawn up in 1868, had not, as we have seen, induced my predecessor, Sir Stafford Northcote, to change his course,—notwithstanding the then recent conquest of Bokhara, and the occupation of Samarkand. But the new Note by Sir Bartle Frere fell upon a mind at once more receptive and more impetuous, and it must be regarded as the beginning of all that followed. It had been preceded by a letter from the same distinguished member of the Indian Council, which was written in May, 1874, and was addressed to Sir J. Kaye, the Secretary of the Foreign Department in the India Office. This letter had recommended the occupation of Quetta, and the establishment of British officers at Herat, Balkh, and Candahar. In reply to this letter a Memorandum had been written by Lord Lawrence, dated November 4, 1874. The Note, therefore, by Sir Bartle Frere, dated January 11, 1875, is to be

regarded in the light of, and has all the marks of being, a controversial reply to Lord Lawrence, and an elaborate defence of his own opinion. It is remarkable that none of these papers—to one of which the Government evidently attaches so much importance—were ever communicated to the Government of India. It is evident from the dates that the Note of Sir Bartle Frere cannot have been communicated even privately to the Viceroy before action was taken in the sense it recommended. This is not surprising. When Secretaries of State take to acting under the inspiration of others, who are not in a responsible position, they do not always like the sources of that inspiration to be known.*

It is one of the advantages of the Indian Council that the members of it are generally men of very different views, who are accustomed to contest each other's opinions, sometimes with the utmost keenness, and very often with the most varied knowledge. Thus the Secretary of State may always hear every question of importance thoroughly sifted; whilst, on the other hand, it is never or very rarely safe to accept without careful examination either the facts or arguments which are put forward in such controversies by individual men. It has always been the favourite device of Parliamentary tacticians, when Indian questions

* I have taken these facts concerning the Papers referred to, principally from the explanatory paragraph in the *Times* of November 14th, 1878.

happen to become the subject of party contention, to quote as conclusive on their side the opinions and arguments of some very able and distinguished man,—concealing altogether the fact that these opinions and arguments had been successfully traversed by others quite equal, or perhaps superior, in weight of metal. This was the method pursued, I recollect, a good many years ago, by the present Prime Minister, in a famous attack he made on the administration of the Marquis of Dalhousie.

Considering, then, the importance which evidently attaches to Sir Bartle Frere's Note of the 11th January, 1875, not only on account of the eminent abilities and many accomplishments of its distinguished author, but also on account of the effect it seems to have produced, it may be well to indicate here some of the statements and arguments it contains.

The first characteristic which strikes me is the elaborate endeavour which this Note makes to establish a great distinction between the policy of Lord Lawrence and the policy of Lord Mayo in respect to Afghanistan. I have shown in the previous narrative that there was no such distinction. Lord Mayo always represented himself as having acted strictly on the lines of policy laid down by his predecessor. The Umballa Conference itself was in pursuance of that policy. All that was said and done there, and, moreover, all that Lord Mayo carefully

avoided saying and doing, was strictly in pursuance of the same policy. The money and arms which Lord Mayo gave to the Ameer was either in implement or in supplement of the assistance which had been given or promised by Lord Lawrence. The assurances for the future were confined within the same general limits of principle which had been traced by Lord Lawrence. There is not the shadow of ground for establishing the distinction which Sir Bartle Frere endeavours to establish, still less for the contrast to which he points. Sir Bartle is quite mistaken when he says that "Shere Ali and all the Afghans are among those who have shared his opinion" in the matter. We have seen that Shere Ali rarely failed to couple the names of Lord Lawrence and of Lord Mayo together as those of two great and equal friends. We have seen that in the very latest communication to the Government of India, when he was trembling under communications which he erroneously interpreted as indications of a change of policy, he not only made an earnest appeal to those joint names, but he singled out Lord Lawrence as his special benefactor, and as the Viceroy from whom he held a "Sunnud" of the highest value.

This mistake of Sir Bartle Frere is not accidental. It arises from a fundamental misapprehension of the principle of Lord Lawrence's policy, and from a kind of misapprehension concerning it which is one of the commonest fruits of political controversy. In order

to combat our opponent's policy, we are very apt, first, to caricature it. Lord Lawrence's policy has been in this way absurdly caricatured. It never was a policy of absolute or unconditional abstention in Afghanistan. It was not this even in internal affairs ; still less was it this in external relations. He began his assistance to Shere Ali before the civil war had been absolutely decided ; and Sir Henry Rawlinson, as we have seen, has actually represented this as a departure by Lord Lawrence from his own policy. It was not so, as I have shown. It may have been a departure from the conception of that policy which had arisen in the minds of his opponents. But we must take Lord Lawrence's policy not from his opponents, but from himself. As regards the external relations of Afghanistan, it was a policy of abstention still more conditional. In the event of foreign interference in Afghanistan, Lord Lawrence not only never recommended abstention, but we have seen that he emphatically recommended resolute and immediate action.

It was my duty as Secretary of State for India during a period of five years, to form as clear and definite a conception as I could of the policy which Lord Mayo always declared to be his own, and the conception of it, which I have here indicated, was that on which Lord Mayo acted, and was prepared to act.

The next observation which occurs to me on Sir Bartle Frere's Note is, that he discusses the

principal measure he recommends—namely, the establishment of British officers in Afghanistan—without the slightest reference to the question whether it had or had not formed the subject of direct engagement with the Ameer, either by Treaties, or by the pledges and promises of Indian Viceroys. Not only does he omit all reference to this question, but he assumes on hearsay evidence, and, as I have shown, quite incorrectly, that the Ameer had expressed his willingness to receive such officers. He treats with ridicule, and even with indignation, one of the objections which Afghan Rulers have always put forward—namely, the difficulty of insuring the safety of such officers among a fanatical people. But, even supposing that this objection had been (what it certainly has not been) wholly ostensible, and only serving to cover the real ground of objection—namely, the fear entertained by the Ameer that he would soon cease to rule in his own Kingdom if British officers were permanently located there—Sir Bartle Frere does not deal satisfactorily with this fear. Indeed, by implication, he admits it to have much foundation. One of the two things which he says we ought especially to keep in view as the main objects of our action, is to impress the Afghans with a conviction that we have no desire “to interfere with their independence and self-government.” He admits that this will require “much self-control and abstinence from unnecessary interference on the part of our representatives.” It will, indeed ; and no man who

considers the position of British officers in contact with such a condition of political society as that presented by Afghanistan, can reasonably deny that the traditional fears of the Rulers of Cabul on this subject have a reasonable foundation.

The occupation of Quetta is recommended, to prevent its falling into the hands of any other Power. But as there was then as little possibility of this as there is now, Sir Bartle Frere is obliged to argue it as part of a much larger plan—namely, that of our meeting Russia on the western frontiers of Afghanistan—a necessity which, indeed, no Anglo-Indian politician can exclude from his view as a possible contingency, but which, on the other hand, considering all the consequences it must involve, no wise man would willingly precipitate. This formidable proposal of “meeting Russia on the western frontier of Afghanistan” is the principle of the whole argument. It points to a course of conduct which could not be pursued without a breach of faith. But this is never mentioned. It is a course which could not be pursued without military expenditure on the largest scale. Yet the Note gravely maintains that only when this course has been conducted to its conclusion, can we hope for Peace Establishments in India. Propositions which seem so careless in respect to our Treaty obligations, and rash and so extravagant in respect to policy—are the basis of the Paper on which the new Policy was founded.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM JANUARY, 1875, TO THE BEGINNING OF THE
VICEROYALTY OF LORD LYTTON IN APRIL, 1876.

IT was only eleven days after the date of this Note—on the 22nd of January, 1875—that Lord Salisbury addressed his first despatch* to the Government of India, directing the Viceroy to take measures with as much expedition as the circumstances of the case permitted, for procuring the assent of the Ameer to the establishment of a British Agency at Herat. When this was accomplished, it might be desirable to take a similar step with regard to Candahar. With respect to Cabul itself, the Secretary of State did not suggest any similar step, as he “was sensible of the difficulties interposed by the fanatic violence of the people.” The reasons for this instruction are calmly and temperately stated in the despatch, these reasons being principally connected with the acknowledged importance of having accurate information from the western frontiers of Afghanistan. It was admitted that “no immediate danger appeared to threaten the

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 31, p. 128.

interests of her Majesty in the regions of Central Asia." But "the aspect of affairs was sufficiently grave to inspire solicitude, and to suggest the necessity of timely precaution." The effect of the Llamakin Proclamation seems to be indicated in the opening sentence, which intimated that "Her Majesty's Government had followed with anxious attention the progress of events in Central Asia, and on the frontiers of Persia and Afghanistan."

There are two very remarkable circumstances to be observed about this despatch. The first is that, although written some eighteen months after Lord Northbrook's Conferences with the Envoy of Shere Ali, at Simla, it indicates no symptom whatever of the opinion that the Viceroy had on that occasion taken an impolitic course towards the Ameer, or had failed to give him anything that could have been safely offered. On the contrary, the whole object of the despatch is to endeavour to force upon the Ameer a proposal of which he was known to be extremely jealous, whilst it did not instruct Lord Northbrook, or even authorise him, to offer any concession whatever in return. If it were true that the Ameer was then sulky or estranged, this was not a very conciliatory, or even a just method of dealing with him. The only excuse for Lord Salisbury is to suppose that at that time it had not occurred to him that any conciliation of the Ameer was required, or that Lord Northbrook's course eighteen months before had given to Shere Ali any

just cause of complaint. This circumstance is a sufficient comment on the candour and the fairness of the attempts lately made by the Government to ascribe to the policy of Lord Northbrook the results produced by the new policy inaugurated by themselves.

The next circumstance observable about this despatch is that, like Sir Bartle Frere's Note, it makes no allusion whatever to the engagements of the Indian Government with the Ameer on the subject of British officers resident in his dominions. This was excusable on the part of Sir Bartle Frere, who did not know all the facts. I venture to think it was a grave and culpable omission on the part of a Secretary of State for India, who ought to have known the engagements by which it was his duty to abide. Not only does the despatch make no allusion to Treaties or pledges on this subject, but it dwells on the loose private gossip which reported the Ameer as having been willing to admit an Agent at Herat; and it makes the still more serious assumption that, "if his intentions were still loyal, it was not possible that he would make any serious difficulty now."*

After the facts which I have narrated in the previous pages, it is needless to produce any farther proof that this despatch was written either in unaccountable

* Ibid., p. 129, para. 6.

forgetfulness, or in more unaccountable disregard, of the plighted faith of the Government of the Queen.

The only indication in the despatch that the Secretary of State at all bore in mind the honourable obligations in this matter under which we lay, is that he did instruct the Viceroy to procure the Ameer's consent. It may be well, therefore, to point out here what this really involved. It is, of course, true that it would be no breach of our engagement with the Ameer, to send British Agents to his country if it could be done with his free consent. But the whole essence of Lord Mayo's promise lay in the pledge that we were not to force that consent by the undue pressure which a powerful Government can put upon a weak one. In the case of two Powers perfectly equal making such an agreement between themselves, it might be always legitimate for either of them to try to persuade the other to abandon the agreement, and to make some other arrangement in its stead. Nor do I deny that it might be perfectly legitimate for the Government of India to sound the disposition of the Ameer from time to time, and to try by gentle means to ascertain whether he could not be persuaded, freely and willingly, to let us off from the promises we had made. This had just been done by Lord Northbrook when he proposed to send an officer to examine the frontier, and to seek an interview with the Ameer at Cabul. The result was to prove that Shere Ali retained

all his dread and all his suspicion of the consequences of any change. It was for the very purpose of leaving the Ameer in perfect freedom to act upon his feelings and opinions in this matter—to make him feel comfortable in regard to it—that Lord Mayo had given him the pledge at Umballa. No such freedom could be left to him if the powerful Government of India were to press him unduly to yield upon the subject. The application of such pressure was, therefore, in itself a departure from the understanding; and to visit a refusal on the part of the Ameer with resentment or with penal consequences of any kind, was the distinct violation of a promise, and a direct breach of faith.

The other circumstance connected with this despatch which deserves notice is the curious Departmental jealousy which the second paragraph incidentally displays of the Foreign Office. After noticing the scantiness of the information which it was in the power of the Viceroy to supply, the paragraph in question proceeds thus:—"For knowledge of what passes in Afghanistan, and upon its frontiers, they (her Majesty's advisers) are compelled to rely mainly upon the indirect intelligence which reaches them through the Foreign Office."

This passage is connected with a very important part of the whole subject, which has not been sufficiently attended to. The observation of Lord Salisbury seems to have been immediately suggested by

the circumstance which has been just narrated, namely, that the information in respect to General Llamakin's proclamation to the Turkomans, and his reported movements on the Attrek, had come from our Mission at Teheran, reporting, as that Mission does, not to the India Office, but to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.* It has, however, been a favourite doctrine at the India Office, that the Persian Mission ought to be now, as it once was, in direct communication with that Office—that it ought to represent the Government of India, and be officered and directed from Calcutta. An emphatic recommendation that we should return to this arrangement was a prominent feature of the advice urged upon the Government in 1868 in the Rawlinson Memorandum of that year. During the time I was at the India Office I have heard the question frequently discussed, and although there are undoubtedly some arguments in favour of the Departmental view, I never could agree with my colleagues who supported it. Teheran is the Capital where Indian and European politics meet. But the centre of interest is European. Even as regards Indian questions, the methods of operating upon them in Persia, are essentially connected with the main cur-

* I believe that, strictly speaking, the Persian Mission reports both to the Home Government and to the Government of India, duplicate despatches being sent to Calcutta.

rents of European diplomacy. I am informed by my relative, Sir John McNeill, who for many years occupied with distinguished ability the post of British Envoy in Persia, that in the disastrous year of the first Afghan war, he felt very strongly that he never could have maintained the influence of England against Russia, if he had been in the position at Teheran of representing merely the Indian Government, and of not directly representing the Queen. It is, of course, true that the Government of India is, and always has been in political matters, the Government of the Queen. But the question depends not on what we know to be the fact, but on what foreign Governments understand to be the fact. There can be no doubt on this — that at any Court, but especially at such a Court as that of Persia, the British Representative would lose in authority and in influence if he were not understood to be the direct representative of the British Sovereign.

This, however, is only part of the question which is suggested rather than raised by the paragraph in Lord Salisbury's despatch of the 22nd of January, 1875, in which he refers to the "indirectness" of the information coming through the Foreign Office. That passage does not necessarily indicate any opinion on the constitution of the Persian Mission adverse to that which I have now expressed. But it does indicate an opinion on the importance and value of the information upon Central Asian politics which is to be derived

through our intercourse with Persia, which has a direct and a very important bearing on the new policy which was about to be pursued towards the unfortunate Ameer. Although I do not agree with Sir Henry Rawlinson that the Persian Mission should represent directly the Government of India, I do most thoroughly agree with him that it ought to be, and that, geographically, it is specially fitted to be, the main source of our information on that branch of Central Asian politics which excites most alarm in the Anglo-Indian mind. The point on which that mind is fixed with special anxiety is Merve, and the affection which the very mention of that word produces is so peculiar, that it almost deserves a special name, and may be called "Mervousness." Now what is Merve, and where is it? It is a wretched village, or at the best a very small and poor town of Turkoman mud huts, undefended, or, if not wholly so, at least defended only by mud walls. It is a nest of robbers. This seems to be admitted on all hands, and the principal circumstance which gives rise to any anxiety about it, is that its inhabitants are always plundering some Russian caravan, or kidnapping some Russian subjects. Geographically, its importance is represented to be that it is not in a desert, but in a tract of country well watered, and more or less cultivated; and that the country intervening between it and Herat, the frontier province of Afghanistan, is of a similar character. The argument is, that if Russia were once established in

Merve, there would be no physical impediment to the march of an army upon Herat. It is one thing, however, for Russia to send a force capable of taking Merve, and a very different thing for Russia either to collect at Merve, or to march from Merve, a force capable of taking Herat—which is a place defended by the strongest walls of earthwork which exist anywhere in the world. Sir Henry Rawlinson describes them as “stupendous.” It is stated on the same high authority that even Merve, if it were defended by a concentration of the Turkoman tribes, could not safely be attacked by a smaller force than 20,000 men, whilst an assault on Herat would require not less than 40,000.* Putting aside, however, all these considerations, which after all can only abate our “Mervousness” a little, the point on which I wish to dwell now is that Merve is within about fifty miles of the Persian frontier, and not more than about 150 miles from the Persian City of Meshed, at which we have an Agent of our Persian Mission. Meshed is much nearer to Herat than Merve, and an active British Agency at that important Persian town would command the earliest and most complete information on every possible Russian movement even upon Merve, and still more easily upon every preparation made there for a further movement upon Herat. Most of the information forwarded by our Envoy at Teheran on the sub-

* *Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1879, p. 255.

ject of movements in Central Asia has been information procured by our Agent at Meshed. The whole line of advance which is feared on the part of Russia, from the Caspian up the valley of the Attrek river, and beyond it in the direction of Merve, is a line of advance parallel with the Persian frontier, along the whole length of the province of Khorassan. It is in the country of tribes which have more or less direct relations with the Persian Government. This was the reason, and an excellent reason it is, why the information touching General Llamakin's proceedings, which aroused Lord Northbrook, but did not arouse Lord Salisbury till the Viceroy had shaken him on the subject, was information procured from our Envoy at Teheran. Sir Henry Rawlinson, in his article in the *Nineteenth Century* for December, 1878, has informed us that a Russian expedition of any formidable strength, attempting to approach the western frontiers of Afghanistan along this line of country, would be dependent for the enormous amount of carriage requisite for the purpose, upon Persian sources of supply. We have it, therefore, as a certainty arising out of geographical facts, and admitted by the highest authority, that the danger of such a proceeding on the part of Russia, is a danger in respect to which we ought always to receive the earliest information from an efficient British Agency in Persia. Such an Agency ought to get, and certainly would get, information of Russian preparations on the Caspian, and of Russian move-

ments from that region, long before any such information could reach a British officer stationed in Herat. Indeed, it is most probable that the rumours reaching an officer in that city would be altogether unworthy of trust, or could only be verified by careful inquiry through our Agents in Persia.

The result of these considerations is to show that whilst Lord Salisbury was now beginning to urge upon the Viceroy a course towards the Ameer which involved a breach of Treaty engagements, and a breach of Lord Mayo's solemn promises, and whilst he was doing so for the sake of a comparatively small advantage, he was at the same time overlooking or treating in the spirit of mere departmental jealousy, another course not connected with any difficulty, or involving any risks, by which the same objects could be, and were actually being, much more effectually obtained. A well-organised system of intelligence in respect to events in Central Asia in connexion with our Missions and Agencies in Persia would enable us to watch every movement of Russia in the direction of Merve, and would be exposed to none of the dangers and objections attending a breach of Lord Mayo's engagements to the Ameer.

There is yet another circumstance connected with this despatch of the 22nd of January, 1875, on which it is necessary to observe. As a justification of the new policy about to be pursued it became a great object with the Indian Secretary to make out that

our native Agency at Cabul was nearly useless. Accordingly in this first despatch and in others that follow, we have this point much laboured, and, as usual, the evidence of the Indian Government on the subject not very fairly quoted. Our native Agent at Cabul was Nawab Atta Mohammed Khan, a Mahomedan gentleman "of rank and character," appointed by Lord Lawrence in 1867, as one in "whose fidelity and discretion" he had "full confidence."* We have seen that this Agent, or his Moonshee, had been admitted to hear discussions in the Durbar of Shere Ali, and had repeatedly conveyed the most valuable and authentic accounts of the feelings and dispositions of the Cabul Government. But it now suited the policy of the Government, and was indeed a necessary part of it, to disparage this Agency as compared with that which it was desired to establish. The truth on this matter is not very far to seek. There are certain purposes for which a native Agent, however faithful, is of no use. If it is authority that we wish to exercise, we can only do it through a British officer. Even if it be the commanding influence which is tantamount to authority that we wish to have, we can only have it by employing a European officer. In short, if we want to domineer we must have an Agent of our own race. And it is precisely for this reason that the Rulers of

* *Afghan Corresp.*, I. 1878, p. 14.

Cabul have always objected to such an Agent. But, on the other hand, if we want simply to gain information through an Agent who is at once faithful to us, and at the same time in sympathy with the Court to which he is sent, then a Mahomedan gentleman, such as Atta Mohammed, is not only as good as, but better than a European. It is inconceivable that a British officer would ever be allowed to be present at Durbars as our native Agent seems to have been. The evidence is indeed conclusive that Atta Mohammed has reported to us the truth, with just that degree of sympathy with the Court to which he was accredited, which, if we were sincere, it was most desirable that he should possess.

The despatch of the 22nd Jan., 1875, seems to have given infinite trouble to the Government of India. There was no difficulty in answering it, but very great difficulty in answering it with that respect which is due to official superiors. It would have been easy to point out that it made no reference whatever to Treaties and pledges which the Government of India was bound to respect,—that it alleged certain things to have been said by the Ameer which, even if they had been said, had nothing to do with the agreement ultimately arrived at,—that it made this allegation on evidence which was not quoted, whilst authentic records were left unnoticed,—that it made the unjust and very unreasonable assumption that if the Ameer desired to claim the

protection of Lord Mayo's promises he could not possibly be loyal in his intentions to Lord Mayo's successors in office,—all this it would have been easy to point out. But, in the meantime, what seemed to be a positive order must be either obeyed or disobeyed. Under these circumstances Lord Northbrook telegraphed to the Secretary of State on the 18th of February, that in the judgment of the Government of India it was inexpedient to take the initiative at that time in the matter referred to—that nothing was traceable in the records at Calcutta showing that the Ameer had ever expressed his readiness to receive a British Agent at Herat, and that he might object to such an arrangement without being at all disloyal in his intentions towards the British Government. Lord Northbrook, therefore, asked whether Lord Salisbury's direction was peremptory, or whether a discretion was intended to be left to the Government of India.* On the 23rd of February, 1875, Lord Salisbury replied that a delay of three or four months would be within the discretion contemplated by her Majesty's Government, and the Viceroy was referred to three officers in India for the truth of the reports as to what the Ameer had been heard to say. They were now scattered in different parts of India and beyond it—one of them, Mr. Girdlestone, being Resident in Nepal. The other two were Sir Richard Pollock,

* *Ibid.*, No. 32, para. 4, p. 129.

Commissioner of Peshawur, and Mr. Thornton, Secretary to the Governor of the Punjaub. But, strange to say, Lord Salisbury does not seem to have made any inquiry of Mr. Seton Karr, who was then in England, and who, as Foreign Secretary to the Government of India under Lord Mayo, was of all men most competent to give trustworthy evidence on the subject. His evidence has been given since, under a sense of what he owed "to truth," and to the memory of the Viceroy under whom he served in 1869. It is characteristic of the spirit in which the matter has been pursued that on account of this evidence he was censured by an Under-Secretary of State in the late debates in the House of Commons, and was represented by that official as having been too imperfectly acquainted with the Native languages to be accurately informed. Mr. Seton Karr has had no difficulty in exposing this attempt to suppress or damage truthful but unwelcome testimony.

The information on which Lord Salisbury was acting was not confirmed even by the officers to whom he expressly referred.

That information mainly rested on a note written by Mr. Girdlestone on the 26th of March, 1869, purporting to report what he had heard "in conversation with Punjaub officials." But on being asked by Lord Northbrook to give some more definite information as to the sources of his impression, that officer very frankly confessed that he had really none to give.

Mr. Girdlestone did not hear the Ameer say one word upon the subject. His memory even failed to recall with certainty the authority from which he had derived an impression that Shere Ali had expressed himself to the effect supposed. His recollection, however, was that the information given to him had come "either from Major Pollock, or Mr. Thornton." The "only other Punjaub official" whom he could specify was Colonel Reynell Taylor, who was Commissioner of Umballa in 1869.*

Let us now see what was said by the other two officers named by Lord Salisbury.

As regarded the present time, Sir R. Pollock was convinced that the Ameer would not willingly consent to receive British officers as Residents in his Kingdom ; and that "as regarded the past, it was well known to Government that the strongest objection has hitherto existed" to any such arrangement.†

Mr. Thornton said that he was not himself at any of the Conferences between Lord Mayo and the Ameer in 1869, and could not consequently speak from personal knowledge of what passed on those occasions. Of Shere Ali's feelings at the present time Mr. Thornton had no doubt. He believed the deputation of European officers into Afghanistan to be highly distasteful to the Ameer and his Councillors. As

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 2, 3, p. 136.

† Ibid., Inclos. 5, p. 137.

regarded the past, he could give no other evidence than that of a certain mysterious personage, designated as "X. Y.," who is explained to have been an Afghan, and who, in the secret records of the "Persian Office," was said to have reported the substance of certain conversations of the Ameer, not at Umballa, but before the Conferences, when he was at Cabul and at Lahore. What makes this mysterious "X. Y." still more mysterious is that he undertook to report private discussions which are expressly stated to have been held between the Ameer and his Minister, Noor Mohammed, "at which no third person was present."* This is one of the great privileges of the writers of fiction. Whether it be of ministers in the most secret conclave, or of conspirators in the darkest den, or only of lovers

"Sitting in a pleasant shade,
Which a grove of myrtles made,"

the novelist has an equal privilege of reporting all that is said. And, stranger still, such is the power of their craft, that it never occurs to any of us to be surprised by the superhuman knowledge they display. It is, however, somewhat new to find grave Secretaries of State opening their ears to this kind of fiction, and preferring it to the evidence both of written documents and of men telling us what they

* Ibid, No. 32, Inclos. 11, p. 143.

knew. Of this more authentic kind of evidence Lord Northbrook's inquiries elicited abundance. For example, General Taylor, Secretary to the Government of the Punjaub, an officer who had exceptional means of information, not only reported his own opinion that the Ameer would not be willing to consent to the proposed measure, and that for many reasons it would not be just to blame him,—but as regarded the past, he reported it to be well known that the Ameer and his advisers had more than once embodied their feelings and their opinions on the subject in the very strong expression, "Do anything but force British officers on us."*

The result, then, of Lord Northbrook's inquiries was to leave nothing whatever in support of the gossip on which Lord Salisbury had proceeded, except the Note and the private Memorandum Book of Captain Grey, the value of which has been already analysed in a previous page.

Having ascertained all this, having gathered the nearly unanimous opinion of all its ablest and most experienced officers on the frontier, and having duly considered and re-considered the formal obligations under which it lay, the Government of India, on the 7th of June, 1875, addressed to the Government at Home a despatch setting forth in detail all the arguments upon which it had come to the decided opinion,

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 6, p. 139.

that there was no evidence of the alleged former willingness of the Ameer to receive European officers, sufficient to justify them in founding upon it any new representation on the subject ; and that on all other grounds it would not be wise or politic to make the proposal. Lord Northbrook and the Council denied that the reluctance of the Ameer to accept it could be fairly interpreted as indicative of disloyal intentions against the British Government. They referred to the fact that without the same special reasons and historical causes the same feeling had always been expressed by the Ruler of Cashmere. They explained that Sir Richard Pollock, who was intimately acquainted with Noor Mohammed, and had confidential information on the real sentiments of the Ameer, was convinced that Shere Ali had no inclination whatever to look for help elsewhere than to the British Government. They pointed out that, though he had been displeased at not having got all he wanted in 1873, he had nevertheless acted on our advice, although most reluctantly, in accepting the Seistan arbitration. They recalled to the mind of the Secretary of State the recorded and specific assurances given to the Ameer by Lord Mayo at Umballa ; they suggested that a change of policy on our part in this matter might throw Afghanistan into the arms of Russia on the first favourable opportunity. They admitted that the presence of a British Agent at Herat would be in itself desirable : and they emphatically

explained that if the threatened movement of Russia upon Merve did actually take place, or even if Russia assumed authority over the whole Turkoman country, they would then deem it necessary to make some new arrangement, and to give additional and more specific assurances to the Ruler of Afghanistan against attack from without; they indicated their opinion that this new arrangement should probably take the form of a new Treaty, and that then the establishment of a British officer at Herat might naturally be brought about. In the meantime, they recommended a steady adherence to the patient and conciliatory policy which had been pursued for many years towards Afghanistan, and that every reasonable allowance should be made for the difficulties of the Ameer.*

The Government at home did not reply to this despatch until the 19th of November, 1875. By this time the Eastern Question had risen above the horizon in its European aspects. The insurrection, as we have seen, had begun in Bosnia and the Herzegovina in the month of July.† On the 18th of August a dim vision of the "Three Emperors" had appeared in the common action of their Ambassadors at Constantinople. They were actually seen consulting together for the purpose of interfering with Turkey, and of sending out the Consular Mission.‡

* Ibid., No. 32, p. 129-135. † Ante, Chap. IV. Vol. I. p. 131.

‡ Ibid., p. 136.

On the 24th of August the Cabinet had been dragged by the force of circumstances, but most reluctantly, to join in this first step taken by the other Powers of Europe. In October it had become apparent that the insurrection was of a most serious character—that the Porte was greatly alarmed—that it was making profuse explanations and promises of reform—that these were being received with contempt by the insurgents, and by incredulity on the part of every Cabinet except that of London. In November it became known that Austria-Hungary was moving forward in the direction of intervention or of interference of some kind, and was in consultation with the Governments of Germany and of Russia. The jealousy and suspicion of the English Ministry had been aroused, and at the very time when Lord Salisbury was preparing his rejoinder to Lord Northbrook, his colleague at the Foreign Office was inditing the first despatch which intimated to our Ambassador at Vienna that the “gravity of the political situation had been undoubtedly aggravated” by the rumours that Austria-Hungary was concerting “some scheme in regard to the Herzegovina without consultation with the Powers, parties to the Treaty of 1856.”* The despatch of Lord Derby was dated November 20th, that of Lord Salisbury was dated November 19th. Written in all probability without any direct connexion, they were nevertheless contemporary

* *Ibid.*, p. 157.

events, and are alike illustrations of the atmosphere of opinion prevalent at the time.

To this atmosphere various breezes had contributed. As in 1874 Sir Bartle Frere had written a Note, so in 1875 Sir Henry Rawlinson had published a book—"England and Russia in the East." In this very interesting and important work, full of local knowledge, and marked by great powers of systematic statement, everything which had hitherto been said in private memoranda for official information, was published to the world. Coinciding with a time when the public mind was beginning to be excited against Russia on other grounds, it could not fail to have a considerable effect. And yet, like every other work full of solid information and of real ability, it ought not to have been without its calming influence if it had been studied and interpreted with care. Although representing Russia as a Power engaged in the attack of a fortress—which fortress was India—and advancing by "parallels" to the attack across the whole length and breadth of Central Asia from Orenburg to the Upper Oxus, it nevertheless set forth very fully not only the immense spaces she had yet to traverse, but the still more immense political and military preparations which she had yet to make. Especially in regard to the "parallel" which started from the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, and was directed towards Herat, it showed how closely connected it was with the Persian frontier, and how any advance upon that line

must depend much on securing the goodwill and co-operation of the Persian Government.* So close was this connexion that the possible ultimate contingency was described to be—that Russia might, after having first taken Herat, launch from that base upon India a force of 50,000 men of Persian “Sirbaz,” disciplined and commanded by Russian officers. Men disposed to be in a panic are neither able nor willing to estimate with any care either the time required or the number of steps to be taken before such a contingency as this could be brought about. The Government, in particular, never seem to have bestowed a thought upon the just importance which Sir Henry Rawlinson set upon the Persian Mission as the agency through which all possible Russian movements in that direction can be most effectually watched, and without the knowledge of which, if it is well organised, it is impossible that any movement towards the capture of such a place as Herat could be made without months, or perhaps even years of warning.†

The entire neglect of all modifying considerations of this kind is conspicuous in the Despatch

* Second Edition, p. 294.

† The Article in the *Quarterly Review* for January, 1879, before referred to, sets forth even more distinctly than Sir Henry Rawlinson had previously done, the dependence upon Persian complicity and support, of any Russian advance upon Herat from the Caspian base.

of the 19th of November, 1875. The consequence was, that treating, as we have seen, all Foreign Office information as "indirect" and comparatively valueless to India, Lord Salisbury had come to attach a most exaggerated value to the establishment of a British Agency at Herat. Every conceivable cause of trouble was conjured up in support of the proposal to press on the Ameer his consent to the reception of a British officer there. The objection to it as a breach of engagement with him, and as highly offensive to him, and the danger of it as liable to throw him into the hands of Russia, are treated with silence or with contempt. The importance of it was argued in connexion with the fear that Russia might acquire by intrigue a dominant influence over the Ameer—with the fear that civil disturbances might arise and lead to the same result—with the fear that the Ameer himself might offend Russia by military expeditions on his frontier—with the fear, above all, of the permanent occupation by Russia of Merve. The Government of India had treated that occupation as a contingency which, if not necessarily distant, could not arise without warning, and which, if it did arise, must yet leave ample time for the British Government to take measures against any possible movement upon Herat. Lord Salisbury, on the contrary, treated it as if it might happen at any moment, and as if, when it did happen, the "time might have passed by when representations to the Ameer could be made with any

useful result." Shere Ali already knew that Samarkand was Russian, and that Bokhara was under Russia, so that he had Russia on his very borders. But if the mud village of Merve were ever to be occupied by the Russians, although it was 100 miles at least from his most distant frontier, then, indeed, he would conclude "that no Power exists which is able to stop their progress." Such is the fever-heat that had been attained under the influence of that condition of mind to which, as being something quite peculiar, and different from anything else, I have ventured to apply the word "Mervousness."

Accordingly, under the influence of these feelings, the Secretary of State, in his Despatch of the 19th of November, 1875, still insisted on his previous instructions, that measures should be taken to procure the assent of the Ameer to a British Mission at Herat. What these measures were to be, I think it safest to describe in the language of the Despatch itself:—

"The first step, therefore, in establishing our relations with the Ameer upon a more satisfactory footing, will be to induce him to receive a temporary Embassy in his capital. It need not be publicly connected with the establishment of a permanent Mission within his dominions. There would be many advantages in ostensibly directing it to some object of smaller political interest, which it will not be difficult for your Excellency to find, or, if need be, to create."*

* *Afghan. Corresp.*, I., 1878, No. 33, para. 15, p. 149.

The Viceroy was, therefore, instructed to find some occasion for sending a Mission to Cabul, and to "press the reception of this Mission very earnestly upon the Ameer." The Envoy was not directed to make any definite offers to the Ameer—any new Treaty—any new dynastic guarantee—or any one of the things which the Ameer had desired. The only reward to be given him for agreeing to sacrifice the surviving Article of the Treaty of 1857 and the pledges of Lord Mayo, was an assurance "of the earnest desire of Her Majesty's Government that his territories should remain safe from external attack." But as this assurance had been given to him over and over again, and with special emphasis and formality by Lord Northbrook, at Simla, in 1873,—as, moreover, he knew it to be true, because it was an assurance founded on our own interests,—this despatch did, in fact, demand of the Ameer to give up that which he valued above all the other boons he had received from former Viceroys, and offered him nothing whatever that was new in return. But more than this—it directed that the new demand should be made upon him, not as a friendly request if he should be really willing to grant it, but under threats. The Envoy was, indeed, to maintain a friendly "tone." But these significant words were added: "It will be the Envoy's duty earnestly to press upon the Ameer the risk he would run if he should impede the course of

action which the British Government think necessary for securing his independence.”*

The Government of India is a subordinate Government, and owes ultimate obedience to the responsible advisers of the Crown. But from the traditions of its history, and from the necessities of its position, its subordination is qualified by a large and a well-understood measure of independence. There were some things in this despatch which that Government could not be made the instrument of doing without remonstrance. In the first place, they objected to the practice of dissimulation towards the Ruler of Afghanistan. They objected to make upon him some demand which was to be only “ostensible,” with the view of keeping back the real object we desired to gain. They wished to be allowed to speak the truth. In the second place, they thought that if the thing were to be done at all, something more definite should be offered to the Ameer than the mere repetition of assurances already given, and which he well knew to be securely founded on a just estimate of our own political interests. They thought that the Viceroy should inform the Ameer that the “condition of affairs in Central Asia made it expedient that the relations between the British Government and Afghanistan should be placed on a more definite footing than at present.”

* Ibid., No. 33, pp. 147-9.

Holding these views, Lord Northbrook and his Council determined that they could not act on the instructions conveyed by the Despatch of November 19, 1875, without another reference to the Government at home, and another full representation of their unaltered opinion on the impolicy of the whole proceeding. This accordingly they did in a Despatch dated the 28th of January, 1876. They had to deal delicately and yet firmly with the suggestion that the Viceroy of India should begin a negotiation with the Ameer by an attempt to cajole and to deceive him. I think it will be acknowledged that they did so deal with it in the following passage:—"The result of our deliberations is that we are convinced that if a Mission is to be sent to Cabul, the most advisable course would be to state frankly and fully to the Ameer the real purpose of the Mission." Lord Northbrook also took occasion, once more, and more decidedly than ever, to remind the Secretary of State that the proposal was "a departure from the understanding arrived at between Lord Mayo and the Ameer at the Umballa Conferences of 1869." He declared that he was in possession of no information which led him to believe that the Russian Government had any intention or desire to interfere with the independence of Afghanistan. He pointed out that the Ameer up to the very latest date, September, 1875, had continued to act on the policy recommended to him by the British Government, and had

prevented his people from showing sympathy with a rising in Kokhand against Russian authority. Finally, the Government of India declared that they continued to "deprecate, as involving serious danger to the peace of Afghanistan and to the interests of the British Empire in India, the execution, under present circumstances, of the instructions conveyed" in the Despatch of November, 1875.*

As Lord Northbrook had now resigned, and as the Government had the prospect of appointing a Viceroy after their own heart, this resolute resistance of the Government of India was suffered to stay proceedings for a time.

The instructions to the new Viceroy were signed on the 28th of February, 1876.† It will be observed that the date of this Despatch is just one month after the Cabinet had been reluctantly compelled to join in the Andrassy Note.‡ Whatever fears and jealousy of Russia had been long affecting the minds of the Government were not likely at that moment to be working with abated force. Accordingly, in its very first paragraph, the Despatch set forth that the "increasing weakness and uncertainty of British influence in Afghanistan constitutes a prospective peril to British interests." This was at least quite honest. There is no attempt here to pretend that the new policy was

* Ibid., No. 34, pp. 149-155.

† Ibid., No. 35, Inclos. pp. 156-9. ‡ See ante, Vol. I., p. 164.

animated by a disinterested anxiety for the welfare of the Ameer. In his former Despatches, as we have seen, Lord Salisbury had not even pretended to offer him any compensation.

But Lord Northbrook's parting remonstrances had effected something. The new instructions adopted his suggestion, that an endeavour should be made to offer to the Ameer something in return for the sacrifice we were demanding of him, and that he should be invited to enter into a larger and more definite arrangement than had heretofore existed. So far the Government had profited by the remonstrances of Lord Northbrook and his Council. Their instructions to him had contemplated no such course, and had enjoined upon him nothing but to make an "ostensible" demand upon the Ameer which was to cover another demand still more obnoxious.

But when we come to examine closely the method in which the new Despatch worked out the suggestion of Lord Northbrook, that if this unjust and inexpedient demand were to be made at all, it should be accompanied by some other proposals of a more soothing character, we find nothing but a series of ambiguities, with a strong under-current of the former tendency to deception. I do not deny that many of these ambiguities arise out of the insuperable difficulty attending the policy to be pursued. The centre of that difficulty lay in this—that the only things which the Ameer really cared to get, were things

which no British Government could possibly give him, whilst, on the other hand, the only things which we could give him, were things which he knew we must give him from motives of our own. How Lord Northbrook would have overcome this difficulty, if he had continued to be Viceroy, it is needless to speculate, because the policy was one of which he disapproved,—on account, partly, of those very difficulties which were inseparable from it. But one thing was clearly indicated in his last Despatch—namely, this, that everything would have been explained to the Ameer with perfect openness, in a friendly spirit, and without aggravating the injustice of violated Treaties and broken promises, by the still greater injustice of menaces and threats.

Let us now see how these difficulties were met by the instructions to the new Viceroy. On the subject of the compensating advantages which might be offered to the Ameer in return for the new demands which were to be made upon him, we shall find that the one great object kept in view by the Secretary of State, was—to offer as little as possible in reality, and as much as possible in appearance.

The first thing which the Ameer was well known to desire was a fixed annual subsidy of considerable amount. Even with this question the Despatch shows a disposition to fence. It was one of “secondary magnitude.” But on the whole the Secretary of State points to an adverse decision, and tells the new Viceroy that

he "would probably deem it inexpedient to commit his Government to any permanent pecuniary obligation" (par. 13). The same liberty, however, which had been given by former Cabinets to Lord Lawrence and to Lord Mayo, was given to Lord Lytton, as to occasional subsidies, to be granted to the Ameer, at discretion, and from time to time.

Next comes the dynastic guarantee—one of the greatest objects of Shere Ali's desire—that the British Government should commit itself to him and to his family, and should promise to support by arms whatever nomination to the succession might be determined by the influence of some favourite inmate of his harem.

With this question Lord Salisbury fences still more obviously. The paragraphs dealing with it (pars. 14, 15, 16)* remind one of the action of a heavy fish rising shyly at a fly, not touching it with its mouth, but giving it a flap with its tail. The Secretary of State refers to the passage of Lord Mayo's letter in 1869 which had been the subject of correspondence between that Viceroy and myself, and respecting the sense of which we had arrived at a clear and definite understanding. He styles that passage a "solemn and deliberate declaration;" and in the next paragraph he calls it an "ambiguous formula." He says that former Governments had not based upon that declara-

* Afghan. Corresp., I., 1878, No. 35, p. 158.

tion any "positive measures." He says that, having been given "under circumstances of some solemnity and parade, it appears to have conveyed (to the Ameer) a pledge of definite action in his favour." He does not venture to affirm directly that Lord Mayo had bound himself to support by arms any succession that Shere Ali might determine to appoint. But he implies it—in the teeth of Lord Mayo's published explanation, that he had specially warned the Ameer that, under no circumstances, should a British soldier cross the frontiers of India in support of any such course.

Having got so far in misrepresenting what had been already done, the Government at last approach the point where it becomes necessary to say something as to what they themselves were prepared to do. But again they come up to that point only to go round about it. "Her Majesty's Government do not desire to renounce their traditional policy of abstention from all *unnecessary* interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan."* The stress here is on the word "unnecessary." Had it become necessary to pledge the British Government to support a nomination virtually made by the mother of Abdoolah Jan? Surely it was possible to say Yes or No to that question. But neither Yes nor No is definitely spoken. Refuge is taken in the "ambiguous formula" of an abstract

* Ibid., para. 16, p. 158.

proposition. It is an ambiguous formula, however, which has a very obvious purpose. "But," says the Despatch, "the frank recognition of a *de facto* order in the succession established by a *de facto* Government to the throne of a Foreign State does not, in their opinion, imply or necessitate any intervention in the internal affairs of that State."

The ingenuity of this passage is great. It enabled Lord Lytton to give to Shere Ali an "ostensible" dynastic guarantee, without giving him the reality. He might recognise the order of succession established in favour of Abdoolah Jan simply as a fact,—just as Shere Ali's own actual occupation of the throne had been acknowledged as a fact. But this acknowledgment need not imply, and ought not to imply, any pledge whatever to support it by force of arms if ever it came to be contested. Thus Shere Ali might be allowed to get the appearance of that which he desired, without the substance.

Having laid this trap for the unfortunate Ameer, and laid it, I must say, with incomparable ingenuity and skill, the Government proceeds to deal with the remaining difficulties of the case precisely in the same spirit. The next thing which the Ameer desired was some guarantee against foreign aggression, which should be practically unconditional—a guarantee which should place the resources of England and of India, in money, in men, and in arms, at his disposal, without any troublesome re-

strictions or control. The Government were in possession of very recent information that such was really the aim of Shere Ali. The only part of the Secret Note of that mysterious individual, "X. Y.," on which any reliance can be placed—because the only part of it which is corroborated by other evidence—is that part in which "X. Y." describes what Noor Mohammed told his master it would be desirable and practicable to obtain. It was this:—"That the money and arms be given by the British Government ; the men composing the troops should be provided by us, and the power and management should rest with ourselves."* How was this state of things to be dealt with in the new instructions ? Let us see.

The first thing to be done, as in the former case, was to put a suitable gloss upon what had been done by former Viceroys,—that the contrast with what was to be done now might be the more imposing. In the case of Abdoolah Jan, this gloss had to be put upon the doings of Lord Mayo. It had now to be put upon the doings of Lord Northbrook. Not much consideration was due to him. He had thwarted the designs of the Government, and he had been compelled to do so in terms which, however respectful, involved reproach. It was all the more natural to discover now, although it had not been discovered before, that there had been something seriously wrong in his proceedings at

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 11, p. 143.

Simla in 1873. The Government had been in office for two years, and had never hinted this opinion to the Government of India ; but an occasion had arisen when the expression of it became convenient. Accordingly (in pars. 21, 22), we have the intimation that the assurance given by Lord Northbrook to the Ameer in 1873 was only a "personal assurance." This is the first hint of a distinction between the promise of a Viceroy and a pledge binding on the Government, of which we shall find great use made in the sequel. In this place it is of no other use than to prepare the way for a disparagement of the proceedings at Simla, which had become necessary for the purposes of the Despatch. That disparagement is proceeded with in the next paragraph (22). Lord Northbrook's declaration is described as just "sufficient to justify reproaches on the part of Shere Ali if, in the contingency to which it referred, he should be left unsupported by the British Government," and yet as "unfortunately too ambiguous to secure confidence or inspire gratitude on the part of his Highness." The suggestion is then made that on account of this conduct of Lord Northbrook the Ameer had "remained under a resentful impression that his Envoy had been trifled with." If, therefore, Shere Ali were to be frank with Lord Lytton's Envoy, he could probably renew the demand addressed to Lord Northbrook in 1873, "that in the event of any aggression on the Ameer's territories, the British Government should distinctly state that it re-

gards the aggressor as its enemy ; and, secondly, that the contingency of an aggression by Russia should be specifically mentioned in the written assurance to be given to the Ameer."*

Here, then, was a suggested demand on the part of the Ameer, which, though by no means expressed in a very extreme form, did indicate a guarantee without definite conditions, and tending to compromise the freedom of the British Government. It would have been easy to tell Lord Lytton at once, and without circumlocution, whether he was to comply with it or not. But, again, we have a very "shy rise," and a sheer-off into the safe obscurity of a foam of words. In the first place, it is explained that the answer must not be made identical "in terms" with the answer of Lord Northbrook. That would be only to prejudice instead of to improve our relations with the Ameer, "by the evasion of an invited confidence."† But then follows a passage which implies that, although the terms were not to be identical, the substance was to be the same. It had been Lord Northbrook's object to keep the freedom of the British Government, and not to let the Ameer have a guarantee without conditions. Again, it would have been easy to say, frankly and openly, whether the Government did or did not mean to keep this free-

* Ibid., p. 159.

† Ibid., para. 23, p. 159.

dom. But, again, they evade the point by the following carefully balanced ambiguities (par. 24): "Her Majesty's Government are therefore prepared to sanction and support any more definite declaration which may, in your judgment, secure to their unaltered policy the advantages of which it has been hitherto deprived by an apparent doubt of its sincerity. But they must reserve to themselves entire freedom of judgment as to the character of circumstances involving the obligation of material support to the Ameer, and it must be distinctly understood that only in the case of unprovoked aggression would such an obligation arise."

It is needless to point out that this is merely a verbose, obscure, and not very ingenuous repetition of the assurance given by Lord Northbrook,—the very same limitations being carefully reserved, and Lord Lytton being simply authorised to go as near as he could to the appearance of an unconditional guarantee without actually giving it. The whole paragraph is an elaborate repetition of the expedient by which it had been suggested that the Ameer should be cajoled on the dynastic guarantee in support of Abdoolah Jan.

In return for these illusory and deceptive guarantees, the largest and most absolute demands were to be made on the unfortunate Ameer. These demands were concealed in terms quite wide enough to cover that which the Ameer had always dreaded and suspected—the complete transfer to us of the whole government of

his country. The British Government was not only to have for their Agents "undisputed access to the frontier positions" of the Afghan Kingdom; not only were they to "have adequate means of confidentially conferring with the Ameer upon all matters as to which the proposed declaration would recognise a community of interests;" but much more—"they must be entitled to expect becoming attention to their friendly counsels; and the Ameer must be made to understand that, subject to all fair allowance for the condition of the country and the character of the population, territories ultimately dependent upon British power for their defence must not be closed to those of the Queen's officers or subjects who may be duly authorised to enter them."

It is needless to point out that there is nothing in the way of interference that might not be brought within the range of this sweeping declaration. The first Article of the Treaty imposed by Russia on the Khan of Khiva was a more honest, but not a more complete, announcement of political subjection. "The Khan acknowledges himself to be the humble servant of the Emperor of All the Russias." This is at least plain and honest speaking, whilst it is to be observed that in that Treaty Russia did not inflict on the vassal Khan the additional humiliation of pretending to respect his independence. The demand to establish an Agency in Herat, or even at several of the cities of Afghanistan, sinks into insignificance when compared

with the intimation that the country might be filled with European officers and emissaries, to any extent the British Government might please, and with the intimation also that the Ameer was expected to pay "becoming attention" to whatever that Government might consider to be "friendly counsel," whether on domestic or on foreign affairs.

Having thus instructed Lord Lytton to make these tremendous demands upon the Ameer, in complete contempt and violation of Treaties and of the pledges of Lord Mayo, it seems to have occurred to Lord Salisbury that he had not even yet sufficiently guarded against the possibility of too much being offered in return. He reverts, therefore, in the 26th paragraph to the subject of the guarantees to be held out to the Ameer. He tells the Viceroy that any promise to be given to Shere Ali of "adequate aid against actual and unprovoked attack by any foreign Power" must be "not vague, but strictly guarded and clearly circumscribed." As if in mockery it was added, that, if a personal promise—in itself so equivocal—were offered to the Ameer, it would "probably satisfy his Highness," "if the terms of it be unequivocal." But the Viceroy was free to consider the advantages of a Treaty "on the above-indicated basis." The Despatch then proceeds to inform the new Viceroy that the "conduct of Shere Ali has more than once been characterised by so significant a disregard of the wishes and interests of the Government of India, that the irretrievable alienation of his confidence in the sincerity and power of that

Government, was a contingency which could not be dismissed as impossible." This is an accusation which is not supported by a single proof, or even by a single illustration. It is in the teeth of the evidence which had just been given on the subject by the Government of India. The Ameer had given no other indication of a "disregard of the wishes and interests of the Government of India" than was involved in a desire to keep that Government to the promises it had given him. It is, however, the common resource of violent men to traduce those whom they are about to wrong.

There is one other passage in these Instructions which cannot be passed over without notice. It is a passage which refers to what may be called the Russophobic literature of England and of India. It states very truly that translations of that literature were carefully studied by the Ameer. "Sentiments of irritation and alarm at the advancing power of Russia in Central Asia find frequent expression through the English press, in language which, if taken by Shere Ali for a revelation of the mind of the English Government, must have long been accumulating in his mind impressions unfavourable to its confidence in British power." The conclusion drawn from this seems to be,—to judge from the rest of the Despatch,—that it would be well to convince him of our power at the expense of giving him the most just reason to distrust both our moderation and our good faith.

How different is the conclusion from that drawn from the same premises by Lord Mayo! I have shown how, in going to Umballa, he wrote to me of the accusations made against the Ameer by the Anglo-Indian press,—then in one of its periodical fits of excitement about the “advances of Russia,”—to the effect that Shere Ali was a mere Russian tool. The inference Lord Mayo drew was, that it was all the more necessary for him to show the silence of conscious strength,—to treat the Ameer with kindness and with confidence,—to give him every possible indication that we had a sincere desire to respect his independence, and to strengthen his Government. In the instructions of Lord Lytton his independence was trampled under foot, and the new Viceroy was educated in every sentiment towards him which could inspire a treatment of distrust and of indignity.

It is the authors and admirers of this Despatch—so imperious in its tone, so violent in its demands, so hollow in its promises—who, in the late debates in Parliament, have pretended that Lord Northbrook in 1873 did not sufficiently favour the Ameer by giving him an unconditional guarantee.

It is not to be understood, however, that this Despatch of the 28th of February, 1876, exhausted the instructions with which Lord Lytton was sent out to India. In the first place, the Despatch as given to Parliament, long and detailed as it is, is only an “extract.” We do not know what other injunctions may have been laid upon him. But, in the second

place, Lord Lytton did not leave England till towards the end of March. During that time he had been in personal conference with Her Majesty's Government, and also with the Russian Ambassador in England.* We know nothing of the results of these conferences, except by occasional allusions to them in later speeches and writings of the Viceroy. From several passages in these we derive one fact which is not unimportant, although, indeed, it is a fact which makes itself sufficiently apparent from other evidence—and that is, that during these months of conference at home, every Indian question was regarded from the one point of view which was engrossing all attention at the time—namely, the point of view which connected it with the Central Asian question. Not only Afghan questions, but all questions affecting what was called border or frontier policy—however local they would have been considered in other days—were canvassed and discussed entirely in their “Mervous” aspects.†

A remarkable illustration of this was afforded

* Ibid. (Simla Narrative), para. 21, p. 165.

† See Parl. Pap. Biluchistan, II., 1877, No. 194, para. 17, p. 356. It is here distinctly stated that the Viceroy, “having had the advantage before leaving England of personal communications” with the Secretary of State, “was strongly impressed by the importance of endeavouring to deal with them (viz., our frontier relations) as indivisible parts of a single Imperial question mainly dependent for its solution on the foreign policy of Her Majesty's Government.” It is by this means that the people of India are to be made to pay for the policy of the Government in the Balkan Peninsula.

by transactions which were going on at the very time of Lord Lytton's appointment. It so happened that one of those questions was in a condition which lent itself very handily to their state of mind. For many years there had been troubles in Beloochistan—troubles between the Khan of Khelat and his nobles and chiefs which often threatened civil war, and were very inconvenient to our trade through Scinde. The Government of India had long been in Treaty relations with this "Khanate," which entitled them to intervene, and to send troops for the occupation of the country. Lord Northbrook had to deal with this matter, and had been advised by his frontier officers to occupy the country with a military force. Instead of this, he had sent an officer, Major Sandeman, who, by less violent measures, had made some progress in remedying the evils which had arisen. But just before he left India, he found it necessary to despatch this officer again into Khelat, and this time attended by a considerable escort,—upwards of 1000 men,—which amounted to at least a military demonstration. Now, as the occupation of Quetta, a town in the Khan of Khelat's territory, was one of the favourite measures always recommended by those who were nervous on the Central Asian Question, it was obviously not only possible, but easy to take advantage of this state of things to make the occupation of Quetta appear to arise out of a purely local exigency, and so to gain an important step in a

new policy, quietly and almost without observation. Accordingly, this seems to have been the design of the Government in the conferences with Lord Lytton before he left London. The last step taken by Lord Northbrook did not fit in quite conveniently with this design, and a somewhat unusual incident occurred. The Viceroys of India always continue in the full exercise of their powers until their successors are actually sworn in at Calcutta. Those who succeed them are generally men not previously well versed in Indian questions, and they usually approach the duties and responsibilities of that great office with a strong sense of the necessity of learning, and of not proceeding hastily on preconceived opinions. Lord Lytton, however, on this occasion, took the unprecedented step of endeavouring to interfere with the action of the existing Viceroy in a very delicate matter, before he himself had been installed in office, if not before he had even set foot in India.* Lord Northbrook very properly declined to divest himself of his functions whilst it was still his duty to discharge them. It had been his duty during a very considerable time to consider carefully all that was involved in the method of dealing with the Khan of Khelat, and he determined to prosecute the measures on which he and his Govern-

* I owe this fact to a statement made during the late debates in the House of Commons by Lord George Hamilton. The interference of Lord Lytton with the then existing Government of India is stated to have been by telegraph.

ment had decided, notwithstanding the unprecedented conduct of Lord Lytton in endeavouring to interfere. But the fact of this endeavour having been made at all is a sufficient indication of the impulse under which the new Viceroy went out, to consider everything in connexion with the prevalent excitement on the "Eastern Question," and to start in India what was called "an Imperial policy."

Let us now follow the course which was taken in this spirit with reference to our relations with Afghanistan.

CHAPTER XVII.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD LYTTON IN APRIL, 1876, TO THE OPENING OF THE PESHAWUR CONFERENCE ON THE 30TH JANUARY, 1877.

THE first thing done by the Government, in communication with Lord Lytton, was to select Sir Lewis Pelly as the Special Envoy who was to be sent to the Ameer. Sir Lewis Pelly is an active and very energetic officer. But he is the very type of all that makes a British Resident most dreadful in the eyes of an Indian Prince who values or who desires to keep even the shadow of independence. His name was at this time notorious over India, on account of his connexion with the very strong measures the Government of India had been compelled to take in the case of the Guicowar of Baroda. There have been, and there still are, many officers in our service in India who have obtained a great reputation for their influence over native Princes, and over the Sovereigns of neighbouring States, by virtue of qualities which seldom fail to secure their confidence. To pass over all of these, and to single out Sir Lewis Pelly was a

very clear publication to the Indian world how Shere Ali was to be treated.

The next thing which Lord Lytton did was to revert to the scheme to which Lord Northbrook refused to be a party—the scheme, namely, of not telling at once to the Ameer the truth respecting the real intention of the Mission—of finding some artificial “pretext” for sending it at all—and of setting forth in connexion with it certain objects which were to be merely “ostensible.” In the 23rd paragraph of the Simla Narrative* Lord Lytton gives his account of this proceeding as if it were one of a perfectly creditable kind. He tells us that the “opportunity and pretext” which had hitherto been wanting for the despatch of a complimentary Special Mission to Cabul were “furnished” by two circumstances. The first of these was his own recent accession to the office of Viceroy of India, whilst the second was the recent assumption by the Queen of the title of Empress of India. With this “ostensible” object, but with “secret instructions” of a very different kind, the Special Envoy was to be preceded by a “trusted native officer, charged to deliver a letter to the Ameer from the Commissioner of Peshawur.” This “pretext” was surely rather too transparent. Shere Ali had seen Lord Lawrence succeeded by Lord Mayo, and he had seen Lord Mayo succeeded by Lord Northbrook ; but neither of these Viceroys had announced

* Afghanistan, 1878, I., No. 36, p. 166.

their recent accession to office in so formal a manner. There did not seem to be any special reason why Lord Lytton should blow such a trumpet before him, which had not been blown by his predecessors. Then, as regarded the new title of the Queen, unless it was to make some change, not merely in the form, but in the substance of our relations, both with our own feudatory Princes and with neighbouring Sovereigns whom we professed to regard as independent, it did not seem obvious why it should be announced to Shere Ali by a Special Envoy. Under the peculiar circumstances of the case, such a method of intimating this event would naturally rather rouse suspicion than allay it.

The letter of the Commissioner of Peshawur, written on behalf of the new Viceroy, was dated May 5, and reached the Ameer on the 17th of May, 1876. It opened by telling him that at a long interview which he had with Lord Lytton, his Excellency had "enquired very cordially after his Highness's health and welfare, and those of his Highness Abdoollah Jan." It informed him of the Viceroy's intentions of sending his friend, Sir Lewis Pelly, for the purposes already explained. No consent was asked on the part of the Ameer—thus departing at once from all previous usage and understanding on the subject. It expressed confidence that the Ameer would fully reciprocate the friendly feelings of the Viceroy. It begged the favour of an intimation of the place at which it would be most

convenient for the Ameer to receive the Envoy ; and it concluded by informing him that Sir Lewis Pelly, who was honoured by the new Viceroy with his Excellency's fullest confidence, would be able to discuss with his Highness matters of common interest to the two Governments.* As it was perfectly well known that the Ameer thought it unsafe for him to leave Cabul, on account of Yakoob Khan's presence there, this letter of the Viceroy was a peremptory message, not only that a Mission would be sent, but practically also that it must be received at the Capital.

The Ameer's reply, which was dated May 22nd, is a model of courtesy and of what he himself calls "farsightedness." He was delighted to hear of the interviews of the Commissioner with the new Viceroy. He was delighted to hear of the accession to office of his Excellency. He was delighted to hear that the Queen had become "Shah-inshah." He added, with much significance, that he had a "firm hope" that from this most excellent title of the Great Queen, "an additional measure of repose and security in all that belonged to the affairs of the servants of God would be experienced in reality."

It is never pleasant for any man who is dealing with a neighbour through "pretexts" to be told so gently and so civilly that they are seen through. It

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 6, p. 174.

must have been particularly provoking to the new Viceroy to be assured of a firm hope on the part of the Ameer that the new Imperial title of the Queen was to be connected with new securities for a peaceful and reassuring policy.

But the Ameer now proceeded to make another intimation which must have been still more provoking. It was part of the case, as we have seen, which the Government and Lord Lytton desired to put forward, that the assurances given to the Ameer in 1873 had not been sufficient, and that on account of this he had no sufficient confidence in our support. This case was seriously damaged by the declaration of the Ameer, which immediately followed, that he saw no use in the coming of new Envoys, inasmuch as his Agent had "formerly, personally, held political parleys at the station of Simla," when "those subjects full of advisability for the exaltation and permanence of friendly and political relations, having been considered sufficient and efficient, were entered in two letters, and need not be repeated now."* So awkward was this passage for Lord Lytton that in the subsequent Simla Narrative we find him compelled to put a gloss upon it, in order to extract its sting. In the same twenty-third paragraph of that Narrative to which I have already referred, the Ameer is represented as having said that he "desired no change in

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 7, p. 175.

his relations with the British Government, which appeared to have been defined by that Government to its own satisfaction at the Simla Conference." The letter of the Ameer does not say this. It does not say or imply that the satisfaction arising out of the Simla Conference was a one-sided satisfaction, felt by the British Government, but not felt by himself. And when we find the Viceroy resorting to this gloss upon the words we understand where the words themselves were found to pinch.

But the next sentences of the Ameer's reply must have been still more unpleasant. He ventured to intimate that he knew quite well that the Viceroy had some ulterior designs, and that the pretexts he had put forward were "ostensible." He begged that if any new conferences were intended "for the purpose of refreshing and benefiting the State of Afghanistan," "then let it be hinted," in order that a confidential Agent of the Ameer "being presented with the things concealed in the generous heart of the English Government should reveal them" to the Ameer.

This letter of Shere Ali was accompanied by a letter from our Native Agent, Atta Mohammed Khan, explaining all that he knew of the motives which had actuated the Ameer, and all the arguments which had been put forward in his Durbar, upon the proposals of the Viceroy. In this letter, the real fundamental objection which has always actuated the Rulers of Afghanistan in resisting the reception of European officers, is fully set forth. That objection is the fear

that these Agents would be perpetually interfering—making demands or proposals which it would be equally embarrassing for the Ameer to grant or to refuse. One of the other arguments put forward as supporting and more or less covering this one great actuating motive was the argument that if the British Government were to urge European officers on the Ameer the Russian Government might follow its example. If this argument had been used in the letter of the Ameer it would have formed a legitimate ground of some temperate and friendly remonstrance on the part of the Viceroy ; because it implies a misrepresentation of the well-known relative positions of the British and Russian Governments towards Afghanistan. But this argument was not used in the letter of the Ameer. It was only reported as having been used in the private consultations of the Durbar.* Our knowledge of the fact that it had been used at all is, indeed, a signal illustration of the fidelity with which we were served by our native Agency, and of the fallacy of at least one of the pretences on which the new policy was founded.

The letter of the Ameer must have reached the Commissioner of Peshawur about the 3rd of June, 1876.† But no reply was given to it for more than

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 8, pp. 175, 176.

† I have assumed here that it takes twelve days to send a letter from Peshawur to Cabul, because in several cases this time seems to have been actually taken. But I am informed that four days only are required.

a month. In the Simla Narrative, the Viceroy, who himself avows that his own letter had been sent upon a "pretext," and had made proposals which were only "ostensible," has the courage to describe the reply of the unfortunate Ameer as a response of "studied ambiguity;"* the truth being that there was about it no ambiguity whatever, and that it was a reply representing straightforwardness itself when contrasted with the letter of Lord Lytton.

Cajolery having failed, it was now determined to try the effect of threats. Accordingly, after the lapse of more than a month, on the 8th of July, the Commissioner of Peshawur addressed another letter to the Ameer—the terms of which were dictated, of course, by the Government of India. We have no official information how this interval of a month had been employed. But we have the best reason to believe that Lord Lytton had difficulties with his Council. Three of its most distinguished members, Sir William Muir, Sir Henry Norman, and Sir Arthur Hobhouse were opposed altogether to the new "Imperial" policy. Somehow, the expression of their opinions has been suppressed. But it is at least extremely probable, from the time spent in discussion and from information which has been published, that their remonstrances had some effect, and that the letter to the Ameer finally decided upon may have

* Ibid., No. 36, para. 24, p. 167.

been delayed by their resistance. The purport of this letter, and the spirit which it was intended to express, was more fully explained in a covering letter which was not addressed directly to the Ameer, but to the British Agent at his Court. This covering letter was written not only to comment upon what the Ameer had said in his own official reply, but also upon the report which had been furnished by our Agent of the debates in the Durbar. It was, therefore, in itself, a very remarkable exposure of that other pretext so long put forward by the Indian Secretary, that our Mohammedan Agent at Cabul did not give us full and trustworthy information as to what was going on in the Capital of the Ameer. Assuming the perfect correctness of our Agent's information, it commented with severity and even bitterness on one or two of the motives and arguments of the Government of Cabul. Some of these arguments it misrepresents. For example, it refers to the fear lest the Envoy "should address to the Ameer demands incompatible with the interests of His Highness."* This is not a correct or a fair account of the fear which had been reported by our Agent. That fear was that the Envoy might "put forward such weighty matters of State that its entertainment by His Highness, in view of the demands of the time, might prove difficult," and that the Ameer should find himself obliged to

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 10, p. 177.

reject it verbally. There is all the difference in the world between these two representations. The one implies a charge against the British Government, or a suspicion of its intentions, that it might desire to injure the Ameer ; whereas, the other implies nothing more than that he feared proposals which might to him appear inexpedient, and that he desired to keep his freedom and his political independence in not being exposed to undue pressure upon such matters.

The letter does indeed give assurances to the Ameer of a desire to consider in a friendly spirit all that he might have to suggest. But behind all these assurances the Ameer knew that the real object was to force upon him the abandonment of the engagement made, and the pledges given, by previous Viceroy on the subject of British officers resident in his dominions. He knew, moreover, that this object was aimed at not by persuasion but by threats. He was warned of the "grave responsibility" he would incur if he deliberately rejected the opportunity afforded him. But the bitterest passage of this letter was that which referred to the frank indication given by the Ameer that he knew there was some object behind,—which had not been explained to him in the "ostensible" purport of the proposed Mission. This detection of the truth by Shere Ali rouses all the indignation of the Viceroy. He has the courage to talk of the "sincerity" of his own intentions. He denounces the "apparent mistrust" with

which his letter had been received by the Cabul Durbar, and he angrily declines to receive an Agent from the Ameer who was to be sent with a view of becoming acquainted with what the Ameer "designated" as the "objects sought" by the British Government. Finally, the Ameer was warned that the responsibility of refusing would rest entirely on the Government of Afghanistan.*

The letter which was addressed personally to the Ameer, and which bore the same date, was much shorter. But it is remarkable in several ways. In the first place it reiterated the "ostensible" pretext that the Envoy was intended to announce Lord Lytton's accession to office, and also the assumption by the Queen of the Imperial title. But, in the second place, it gave renewed assurances that the Viceroy was sincerely desirous, not only of maintaining, but of materially strengthening, the bands of friendship and confidence between the two Governments, and it gave some obscure intimations of the benefits to be conferred. It did not distinctly promise a dynastic guarantee, but it hinted at it. Still less did it explain the device under which it had been discovered how an apparent dynastic guarantee could be given without involving any engagement whatever to support a "*de facto* order of succession" in case of its being disputed. But it did cautiously

* Ibid, pp. 176-177.

and carefully, and in very guarded language, just suggest to Shere Ali that something might be in store for him "more particularly affecting Afghanistan and the personal welfare of His Highness and his dynasty." Finally, the letter ended with a threat that if the refusal of the Ameer should render nugatory the friendly intentions of the Viceroy, his Excellency would be obliged "to regard Afghanistan as a State which has voluntarily isolated itself from the alliance and support of the British Government."*

These communications, which were dated at Peshawur on the 8th of July, must have reached the Ameer about the 20th of that month. On receipt of the letter to himself, together with the farther explanations, all conceived in the same spirit, which our native Agent was at the same time ordered to give him, the unfortunate Ameer was naturally at once alarmed and incensed. He saw that the powerful British Government was determined to break—and was then actually breaking—the promises made to him by former Viceroys, and he saw that this determination was unqualified and unredeemed by any promises which were of the slightest value. Whenever a Mohammedan Sovereign gets into a passion, or into a scrape out of which he does not see his way,—whenever, in short, he is driven to the wall,—his uniform resource is to appeal, or to con-

* *Ibid.*, No. 36, Inclos. 9, p. 176.

template an appeal, to Moslem fanaticism. On this occasion, Shere Ali was reported to have looked round about him, and to have consulted "Mollahs" as to whether he could get up what is called a "Jehad" or religious war. This, however, was merely a personal display of temper, and no symptom of it appeared in his official communications. He took some time but, under the circumstances, by no means an unreasonable time, to consider his course. His reply was dated September 3, 1876—or six weeks after he had received the Viceroy's letter. It is characteristic of the spirit in which the Simla Narrative of these transactions was written, and of the accuracy of its statements, that the 25th paragraph of that document calls this interval "a significant delay of two months." Considering that the Viceroy had himself delayed to answer the Ameer's former letter of the 22nd of May from about the 3rd of June, at which date it must have reached Peshawur, till the 8th of July, a period of five weeks,—considering that the British Government had nothing to fear, and nothing to lose—and considering that the Ameer had, or deemed himself to have, everything at stake, and had taken only one week longer to deliberate than Lord Lytton himself, this invidious misstatement of the Ameer's conduct is as ungenerous as it is inaccurate.

On the 3rd of September the Ameer replied, making three alternative proposals. One was that the Viceroy should agree to receive an Envoy from Cabul, who might explain everything. The next was that

the Viceroy would send an Envoy to meet on the frontier a selected representative of the Afghan State. A third was that the British Native Agent at Cabul, who had long been intimately acquainted with all his wishes, should be summoned by the Viceroy, and should expound the whole state of affairs, and that on his return to the Ameer he should bring a similar explanation from the Government of India.*

On the 16th of September the Viceroy replied through the Commissioner of Peshawur, accepting the last of these three alternatives, on the condition that the Ameer should explain his views fully and confidentially to the British Agent. In that case the Agent would be as frankly informed of the views of the British Government, and would explain them to the Ameer on his return to Cabul.† Our Agent, Atta Mohammed Khan, was directed to make all speed to meet the Viceroy at Simla, and not to let the object of his journey be known if any inquiries should be made about it.

The British Agent at Cabul, the Nawab Atta Mohammed Khan, reached Simla in time to have a conversation with Sir Lewis Pelly and others on behalf of the Viceroy, on the 7th of October. The Ameer had declared that he had nothing to add to the wishes he had expressed at Umballa in 1869, and

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 14, p. 179.

† Ibid., Inclos. 16, p. 179.

through his Minister at Simla in 1873. But the Agent, on being asked to give his own estimate of the feelings of the Ameer and of the causes "which had estranged him from the British Government," mentioned eight different circumstances or transactions which were "among the causes of annoyance and estrangement." At the head of these was the Seistan arbitration. Our recent doings in Khelat came next. Our interference on behalf of his rebellious son, Yakooob Khan, was third in the list. The fourth was our sending presents to his feudatory, the Khan of Wakhan. The fifth was the results of the Conferences in 1873, during which his Minister had received some personal offence. The sixth was the terms of certain recent letters from the Commissioner of Peshawur. The seventh was that the Ameer counted on our own self-interest as the best security for our protection of his country. The eighth was our refusal to give him the offensive and defensive Treaty which Lord Mayo had refused to him at Umballa, and which had been refused ever since.

On the other hand, the Agent specified seven things which the Ameer really desired from us. First and foremost of these things was an engagement that no Englishman should reside in Afghanistan, or at all events in Cabul. The second was a renunciation of all sympathy or connexion with Yakooob Khan, and a dynastic guarantee of the succession as determined by himself. The third was a promise "to support the

Ameer, on demand, with troops and money, in all and every case of attack from without," as well as against internal disturbance.* The fourth was a permanent subsidy. The fifth was an engagement not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. The sixth was that in any engagement made, words should be introduced making the alliance strictly offensive and defensive on both sides. The seventh was that we should recognise him by some new title, as he considered himself quite equal to the Shah of Persia.†

Having ascertained all this, which showed that the Ameer adhered closely and pertinaciously to the very same desires which he had vainly pressed on former Viceroys, Lord Lytton determined to see the Agent himself, and was, of course, obliged to make up his mind how far he would go in the direction of conceding, or appearing to concede, what his predecessors in office had been compelled to refuse. Strange to say, he began the conversation by telling the Agent that his information "was very full and interesting, but quite new." It will be seen from the narrative previously given that, on the contrary, there was very little indeed that was new, and that the Ameer's principal objects had been perfectly well known, and very accurately appreciated both by Lord Mayo and by Lord Northbrook. Lord Lytton then proceeded to

* Ibid, p. 182.

† Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 18, pp. 181, 182.

explain to the Agent that the Ameer was mistaken in supposing that we should support him unless it were our own interest to do so, and that if he did not choose to please us, "the assistance which he seemed at present disinclined to seek or deserve, might, at any moment, be very welcome to one or other of his rivals." He further informed the Agent that the moment we ceased to regard Afghanistan as a friendly and firmly allied State there was nothing to prevent us from coming to "an understanding with Russia which might have the effect of wiping Afghanistan out of the map altogether." This was very threatening language. There was a good deal more of a similar kind, conceived in the worst possible taste. Thus, the Ameer was to be told that the British military power could either be "spread round him as a ring of iron," or "it could break him as a reed,"—and again that he was as "an earthen pipkin between two iron pots." But bad as all this was in tone, it did not involve any incorrect statement of facts. It was accompanied, however, by another announcement for which, so far as I know, there was not the shadow of justification. "If the Ameer does not desire to come to a speedy understanding with us, Russia does; and she desires it at his expense."* If this passage has any meaning, that meaning appears to be that Russia desired to come to some arrange-

* Ibid. p. 183.

ment with England under which the Kingdom of Cabul was to be sacrificed either in whole or in part. No papers justifying this statement have been presented to Parliament. I believe it to be one without the shadow of a foundation.

The Viceroy next proceeded to make a very satisfactory declaration—which was, that the British Government was then “able to pour an overwhelming force into Afghanistan, either for the protection of the Ameer, or for the vindication of its own interests, long before a single Russian soldier could reach Cabul.” It is well to remember this : but the confidence expressed is not very consistent with the context either of words or of conduct.

It now became necessary, however, for the Viceroy to come to the point—how much he was prepared to offer to the Ameer. As preparatory to this he found it convenient, as his official instructions had done, to disparage what the Ameer had got from former Viceroys. Lord Lytton, therefore, went on to observe that “the Ameer has hitherto had only verbal understandings with us. The letter given him by Lord Mayo was not in the nature of a Treaty engagement, and was, no doubt, vague and general in its terms.”

I have already expressed my opinion on this attempt to impair the binding obligation of solemn promises and pledges given by the Viceroys of India, whether they be merely verbal, or written only in the form of letters. It is a doctrine incompatible with that con-

fidence which has hitherto been maintained in the honour of the British Government in India, and cannot be too severely condemned. It is a doctrine incompatible with the faithful fulfilment by the Crown of the assurances given in that very solemn document, the Proclamation issued on the assumption by the Crown of the direct Government of India—"We hereby announce to the Native Princes of India, that all the treaties and engagements made with them by, or under the authority of the East India Company, are by us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained." On no other principle can we keep our ground in India, and no Viceroy before Lord Lytton has ever attempted to evade it.

Lord Lytton then proceeded to detail the concessions he was willing to make. He agreed to the formula, "that the friends and enemies of either State should be those of the other." But the very next concession showed that some reserve was nevertheless maintained. Shere Ali had always asked for an absolute guarantee against aggression. But Lord Lytton would not omit the qualifying word which all former Viceroys had insisted upon—namely, "unprovoked." Of course the insertion of this word kept open the discretion of the British Government in each case, and, moreover, implied some sort of control over the foreign policy of the Ameer. The Viceroy also agreed to "recognise Abdoolah Jan as the Ameer's successor." But this was also qualified with great care

and some ingenuity. The qualification of the Cabinet, as we have seen, would have reduced this guarantee practically to a nullity. Lord Lytton tried hard, at a second interview with the Agent, to express the qualification in a manner as little formidable as possible to the Ameer. "If the Ameer, or his heir, were ever actually ejected from the throne of Cabul, the British Government would not undertake a war with the Afghans for their restoration. If, however, the Ameer gave notice in due time, while still in possession of his throne, that he was in difficulties, and needed material assistance, such assistance would be afforded within the limits of what might be found practically possible at the time."* I do not deny that this was quite as much as the Ameer could reasonably ask. On the contrary, I entirely agree with Lord Lytton that it was so, and quite as much as the British Government could safely give. But it was no appreciable addition to what had been actually done by Lord Lawrence and by Lord Mayo. They had both assisted him with money and with arms—on the very ground that he was in actual possession of his throne, although still in danger of losing it. This indeed had been their declared policy, and to this all their promises and assurances had pointed. But this was not what the Ameer wanted. It kept that element of discretion in the hands of the British Government to judge of the policy to be pur-

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 20, p. 185.

sued in each case, which destroyed the whole value of it in the opinion of the Ameer. Lord Lytton did indeed make one rather shy offer connected with this subject, which, I venture to think, might have landed us in a very false position, and in a very unjust course of conduct. He offered, if Shere Ali wished it, to keep Yakoob Khan in safe custody in India. That is to say, the British Government were to act as jailors for the Ameer of Cabul. If this meant that we were to bind ourselves by Treaty to prevent Yakoob, under whatever circumstances, from becoming a candidate for the throne of his father, it was a most dangerous offer, and we cannot be too thankful that it was not accepted.

Lastly, Lord Lytton did agree to offer a yearly subsidy to the Ameer, the amount of which, however, and the conditions of which, were left open for detailed consideration.

On the other hand, in return for these very small advances on what Shere Ali had already obtained in the promises and assurances of former Viceroys, Lord Lytton required him to give up absolutely that on which, as we have seen, he set the highest value. His foreign policy and conduct was to be absolutely under our control. This control was to be symbolised, if it was not to be actually exercised, by British officers resident at Herat and elsewhere on his frontiers. Afghanistan was to be freely open to Englishmen, official and unofficial. The result was that the

Ameer was offered nothing of that which he really desired, whilst, on the other hand, he was required to grant to us the whole of that demand which he had always regarded with the greatest dread.

Primed with this strange mixture of bluster and of baits, our Agent was sent off to Cabul, to translate it all as best he could to the unfortunate Ameer. For this purpose he was furnished with an "Aide Mémoire." It summed up the promises as plausibly as possible; it maintained the substantial limitations in terms as subdued and obscure as could be devised; but it distinctly made all these promises absolutely dependent on the new condition about the reception of British officers—and worse than this, it plainly intimated that not only were the new promises to be absolutely dependent on this condition, but the maintenance of existing promises also. Without that new condition, the Viceroy "could not do anything for his assistance, whatever might be the dangers or difficulties of his future position."*

The Agent was also charged with a letter from the Viceroy to the Ameer, in which Shere Ali was referred on details to the full explanations given to our Agent. But in this letter the Viceroy ventures on the assertion that he was now offering to the Ameer what he had vainly asked from former Viceroys. This assertion is thus expressed: "Your Highness will thus be assured

* Ibid. No. 36, Inclos. 21, pp. 185, 186.

by the Agent that I shall be prepared to comply with the wishes which you announced through your Agent at Simla in 1873, and to which you have adhered in more recent communications."*

But our native Agent was not the only diplomatist charged with this important mission. The Ameer had offered, as one of his alternatives, to send a special Envoy to meet upon the frontier another similar Envoy from the Viceroy. Lord Lytton would now graciously agree to this proposal. Sir Lewis Pelly was to be his Envoy. In anticipation of the Ameer's consent this officer was furnished with a long paper of recapitulations and instructions, dated October 17th, 1876, and also with a Draft Treaty.†

It is a matter of the highest interest to observe in these papers how deftly the delicate subject is dealt with in regard to the difference between what the Ameer desired to get, and what it was now proposed to give to him. In the fifth paragraph of Sir Lewis Pelly's new instructions he is desired to be governed by the terms of Lord Salisbury's despatch of the 28th of February, 1876.‡ We have seen how very safe and how very dexterously drawn this despatch was. But, on the other hand, as it was desirable to show as fine a hand as possible at this

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 22, p. 186.

† Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 23 and 24, pp. 187-191.

‡ Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 23, p. 187.

juncture, the following audacious statement is made in the sixth paragraph :—"The conditions on which the Governor-General in Council is now prepared to enter into closer and more definite relations with the Government of Afghanistan are in every particular the same as those desired by the Ameer himself on the occasion of his visit to Umballa in 1869, and again in more or less general terms so urged by him on the Government of India through his Minister, Syud Noor Mohammed Shah in 1873."

I call this statement audacious, because, as regards the transactions of 1869, it is contradicted in every syllable by an authoritative document which the Government of India must have had before it at the time. In certain paragraphs of Lord Mayo's despatch to me, of the 1st of July, 1869, we have a full explanation by that Viceroy of the unconditional character of the guarantees which were then desired by the Ameer, and which Lord Mayo had decided it was impossible to give him.* The assertion that the assurances which the Viceroy was now willing to offer to the Ameer corresponded "in every particular" with those thus described by Lord Mayo, is an assertion which it is impossible to characterise too severely.

Considering that Lord Lytton had just heard from the mouth of our own Agent at Cabul how very different "in every particular" the Ameer's

* Ibid., No. 19, paras. 8, 9, 10, 11, and 45, pp. 95 and 97.

real demands continued to be from the concessions which it was possible for the Viceroy or for any British Government to make, this broad assertion is one which is truly astonishing. It is all the more so, as in the very same document there is another paragraph (25), which seems to lay down the principle that the British Government could not go further than was consistent with the principles laid down by Lord Mayo in 1869, and the next paragraph (26) proceeds thus:—"For the same reason, the British Government cannot contract any obligation to support the Princes of Afghanistan against the opposition of the Afghan nation, or any large majority of their subjects whose loyalty has been alienated by misgovernment or oppression."*

In like manner, when we turn to the Draft Treaty which was placed in Sir Lewis Pelly's hands, we find the most elaborate precautions taken to prevent the assurances given from coming near to the guarantees which the Ameer really wanted. This is done by the constant introduction of qualifying words, and by a perfect wilderness of saving clauses. Let us take the Articles most important to the Ameer. First comes the External Guarantee. The Third Article† professes to give it. There was less need of caution here, because this guarantee coincides with our own interest in almost every conceivable case.

* *Ibid.*, p. 189. † *Ibid.*, p. 190

Nevertheless it was not to operate unless the Ameer had acted in strict conformity with the previous Article, which purported to be one of mutually offensive and defensive alliance. Nor was it to operate unless the Ameer had refrained from (1) provocation of, or (2) aggression on, or (3) interference with, the States and territories beyond his frontier. Besides all this, the succeeding Article, the Fourth, specifies that the Ameer was to conduct all his relations with foreign States in harmony with the policy of the British Government. Next comes the Dynastic Guarantee. It professes to be given by the Ninth Article. But this Article simply "agrees to acknowledge whomsoever His Highness might nominate as his heir-apparent, and to discountenance the pretensions of any rival claimant to the throne." But this is no more than Lord Mayo's promise of "viewing with severe displeasure" any disturbers of the existing order. There is no direct promise whatever to support the Ameer's nomination, if it should turn out to be unpopular in Afghanistan.

But the provisions of the Tenth Article are the best specimens of Lord Lytton's favours. This Article professes to provide for our non-interference in domestic affairs, and yet at the same time to hold out a prospect to the Ameer of support in the event of domestic troubles. This required some nice steering. Accordingly the saving clauses are positively bewildering. There is, first, the promise of abstention. Then there is the exception—"except at the invocation of

the Ameer." Then there are limitations on such an appeal. It must be to avert the recurrence of civil war, and to protect peaceful interests. The support may be material, or only moral, as the British Government may choose. The quantity of the support in either case was to be measured by their own opinion of what was necessary for the aid of the Ameer. But, again, even this aid was to be limited to the protection (1) of authority which was "equitable," (2) of order which was "settled," and (3) against an ambition which was "personal," or (4) a competition for power which was "unlawful."

I do not say that any one of these limitations was in itself unreasonable, or even unnecessary. But they were all elaborately designed to keep in the hands of the British Government, under the forms of a Treaty, that complete freedom to judge of each case as it might arise, according to times and circumstances, which Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook had been determined to maintain. It was, however, precisely for the purpose of limiting this freedom that the Ameer had desired to get a Treaty. To offer him a Treaty which kept that freedom as it was, could be no response to his desires. It was, therefore, worse than an "ostensible pretext" to represent such a Treaty as a concession to the Ameer of that for which he had asked. The Viceroy, however, did not trust wholly to these illusory representations of the effect of the offered Treaty. He knew that the

Ameer was in want of money. The hooks were therefore heavily baited. If the Ameer agreed to sell his independence, he was to get £200,000 on the ratification of the Treaty, and an annual subsidy of £120,000.*

But, guarded as the Draft Treaty is in all these ways, the Viceroy seems to have been haunted by a nervous apprehension lest, after all, the Ameer should get some promise too definite and entangling. Sir Lewis Pelly was therefore also furnished with another "Aide Mémoire," for a "Subsidiary, Secret, and Explanatory Agreement."† In this document the reservations limiting our pretended guarantee are re-stated with laborious care.

In the twenty-seventh paragraph of the Simla Narrative, a very frank confession is made of the general result of these elaborate precautions. That result was that the poor Ameer, in return for all our demands, was to get practically nothing beyond what Lord Mayo had promised him in 1869. "These concessions, sanctioned by your Lordship's last instructions, would not practically commit the British Government to anything more than a formal re-affirmation of the assurances already given by it, through Lord Mayo, to the Ameer in 1869, and a public recognition of its inevitable obligations to the

* Ibid., p. 192.

† Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 25, p. 191.