attention of the English Government. Nearly two years had passed since the change of Ministry had occurred which placed Mr. Disraeli at the head of affairs. He considered himself in a position to make a new departure in foreign policy. His enemies were not only in the dust, but were, in that lowly position, quarrelling amongst themselves. His great antagonist had retired from parliamentary strife, and was directing his vehement intellectuality against the head of the Catholic Church. The country, it was said, had had a surfeit of the smaller politics, of votes and ratings, of legislation upon public worship and public houses. As to other nations, America was still involved in the financial difficulties consequent upon her great civil conflict; France and Germany were only intent upon their own frontiers; Russia, the power from which opposition must be expected, had not yet quite recovered, in Europe at all events, the position lost in the Crimean War. The time seemed favourable to an extension of boundary and increase of influence which had for first and principal object the selection of future positions on the shores of the Mediterranean and on the Indian frontier where the final struggle between Russia and Great Britain would probably be decided. During the four preceding years the progress of Russian arms in Central Asia had been great. Russia's conquest of the khanates of Bokhara, her invasion of Khiva and extension of power among the Turkomans of the Kirghiz Steppes, had brought her outposts within measurable distance of Afghanistan. In 1875 the Eastern question was being stirred anew along the European and Asiatic borders of Turkey; and the time seemed at hand when Russian armies might

again move upon Constantinople. It had become an urgent question to the Government whether, in face of the further approach of Russia towards the Indian frontier, England should maintain the attitude of inaction which for some years she had adopted towards the Amir of Afghanistan, or should anticipate her Asiatic rival by extending and consolidating her predominance in that country.

For more than a generation there had existed two schools of politicians in England and in India on this great question. Of course they had given each other names. There were the men of 'masterly inactivity' and the men of 'mischievous activity'—those who were said to wait upon events and those who thought that events might wait upon them. Chief among the former stood Lord Lawrence. These schools differed as to the imminence of Russian aggression; but it was upon the method of preparation against that aggression that they differed far more seriously. The valley of the Indus from Peshawur to the Indian Ocean has along its western side a range of mountains rising in highest altitude to 12,000 feet above sea level. Beyond those mountains lay Afghanistan and Baluchistan, states inhabited by fierce and fanatical Mahommedan tribes. Into these wild countries the men of 'masterly inactivity' did not wish to go. Let us remain in the valley of the Indus (they said), develop our internal resources, and let the people of India see that we are ruling them for their own welfare. Those arid and desolate regions beyond once entered, we shall have to maintain there large and costly garrisons; we shall rouse to undying hatred the mountain tribes whose motto for a thousand years has been that they were 'content with all the

hardships of life, but never had been, and never would be, content with a master.' Leave them to themselves, and they will be our friends; go among them, and they must become our enemies.

Such, in brief, were the arguments and assumptions of those who were said to wait upon events. But stronger perhaps than any other opinion put forward by them was the belief that India could not bear the burden of extra taxation which a forward policy might entail, and that to maintain such garrisons in Afghanistan as could hold that country would mean the complete breakdown of the financial equilibrium of Hindostan.

The forward school could adduce arguments of equal if opposite cogency. A century ago two thousand miles had intervened between English and Russian territory in Asia. Fifty years ago the outposts had drawn nearer by a thousand miles; in 1876 they were but half that distance apart. Should we ourselves remain stationary, it might ultimately happen that Russian hosts would look down on the valley of the Indus from the passes of the Sulimani range.

Colley, deeply read in the science of war and in the practical lessons of modern campaigns, contributed materially to the formation of those newer opinions on the strategical aspect of the question which began at this time to prevail. In opposition to the school which professed itself satisfied that the actual frontier was good in a military sense, he maintained that it was as weak and faulty as it could well be; that a mountain frontier to be strong should hold the entrance to the passes on the further side as well as their debouches on the nearer one; that otherwise a powerful enemy in possession of Afghanistan could

select his road and his point of attack; that the existing frontier was convenient only to the treacherous and turbulent tribes beyond, affording them, as it did, a ready means of descent upon our people, and of retreat to their own fastnesses whither they were safe from our pursuit.

The desirability of improving this state of things by taking advantage of such occasions as might arise to secure the principal passes was urged by the forward school. That term, like every other phrase by which it is sought to summarise the collective opinions of many men, was in a sense misleading. The forward school had many sets within its fold. There were those who would have pushed the policy very far, revising completely the existing boundaries of India, and going to meet the enemy whose advance from the north and west they believed in; there were others who would have been content with an intermediate position between the existing frontiers of the two great Powers; and there were again some, and Colley was one of them, whose views of desired extension did not reach beyond possession and command of the three principal passes—the Bolan, the Kuram Valley, and the Khyber—leading from India to Afghanistan.

In his opinion the policy of inaction had not been justified by results. During eight years it had been tried, and while our influence had decreased in Afghanistan, that of Russia was increasing. We were, in fact, trusting for success to a turn of the wheel of fortune; while we ought to have opposed the approach and influence of Russia by every method of active alliance with Kabul. The attainment of that difficult political ideal—a faithful

intermediate ally—would assure to India economic advantages which might well counterbalance attendant responsibilities.

At the threshold of the whole question lay this stumbling-block of Afghanistan. The waiting school admitted the necessity of supporting the ruler of Afghanistan when the moment of aggression from the north came. The active school declared we should anticipate that moment. Extreme men might be for conquest. But the cooler heads of the party desired to consolidate our alliance with Sher Ali by diplomatic pressure rather than insist upon friendship by force.

Space allows only a scanty summary of Afghan affairs at the time of Lord Lytton's appointment. The good understanding with the Amir, which dated from the Governor-Generalship of Lord Lawrence, had steadily declined. We had refused in 1869 to accord the treaty of alliance which upon Sher Ali's accession he had solicited from Lord Mayo at Umballa. Other causes of estrangement and misunderstanding arose: the anti-Afghan award of the Seistan Boundary Commission; our interference on behalf of Sher Ali's rebellious son, Yakub Khan; our refusal to secure the Afghan succession to Abdulla Jan; and our refusal in 1873 (when the Amir sent a special envoy to Simla) to guarantee his kingdom against external aggression. From that time he assumed an attitude of increasing resentment and suspicion towards England, and more willingly entertained the courtesies of Russia, which hitherto he had rejected.

Such was the situation at the close of 1875. It was one which the English Government thought it

unwise to neglect in its relations with Afghanistan; and when Lord Lytton was selected by Mr. Disraeli to succeed Lord Northbrook, the appointment was known to represent an important change of attitude towards our Indian Empire and its neighbours. It was resolved as a first move in the new policy to try and induce the Amir Sher Ali to receive British agents at certain cities in his dominions. If the Amir should be disposed to enter on a closer alliance based on this condition, the Home Government and the new Viceroy were ready to go a long way to meet Sher Ali's wishes and to secure his friendship. All the Amir had asked in 1869 and 1873 was now to be at his disposal—liberal subsidies, definite guarantees, and strong material aid against aggression. If the preliminary stipulations were only what previous Governments had considered necessary, still they marked in Afghan eyes concessions of considerable significance; but it was said that Sher Ali himself would have accepted them at that earlier date when he still trusted our friendship and looked to us for support.

Lord Lytton reached Bombay on April 7. Settling down into the business of Indian life occupied a few days, and then the first steps were taken. The change in the Viceroyalty, and the necessary announcement to the Amir of the Queen's assumption of the Imperial title, seemed to offer occasion for a friendly and complimentary mission to Kabul, which was also to discuss with the Amir matters of grave importance to the Governments of India and Afghanistan. A native officer on the personal staff of the Viceroy was sent forthwith to Kabul as an advance courier to inform the Amir of the intention

to despatch Sir Lewis Pelly on a special embassy to Kabul.

Rumours of remote disturbance seem already to have reached the Kabul Durbar, threatening vague trouble from this quarter and from that. A sirdar from the Bokharian frontier brought a curious tale. 'It was openly said by the Russians in Samarkand and Turkestan that the daughter of the Emperor of Russia, married to one of the English princes, had been offended, and had complained to her father; there was a rupture between the two Powers.' It was rumoured, too, that the English were about to occupy Kandahar. On hearing these and other reports all seemed concerned, shaking their heads while the Amir remained mute. Upon one point he had made up his mind. 'He believed the English Government, thinking seriously of the approach of the Russians to Merv, were desirous of sending an envoy to Kabul, or by his permission to remain at Herat. It will embroil him in difficulties, he thinks, and give cause to the Russians at Samarkand to say that the Afghans are taking hostile measures against them.'

A few days later the Viceroy's native envoy reached Kabul. He was sent back with a letter couched in evasive language, but practically amounting to a refusal of Lord Lytton's proposal. Nor could the further correspondence elicit more favourable response than a suggestion on the Amir's part of a frontier meeting between the agents of the two Governments—a suggestion which ultimately resulted in the abortive conference at Peshawur. There can, I think, be little doubt that the Amir had now assumed the attitude of a potentate between two rival suitors for favour; in poise of mind amid

their solicitations, and by no means in a hurry to lightly sell himself to either.

Those who have followed thus far the life of Colonel Colley will understand something at least of the energy and determination with which he took up the great questions which his new appointment opened to him. The hot season of 1876 had been spent at Simla. Amid the more serious diplomatic and administrative work there was plenty of lighter occupation. In September Colley had written to a friend:

> You ask me *what* a military secretary really is. I think I can best answer in Lord Lytton's words when he offered it me: 'After all an appointment is always very much what the man who fills it—makes it,' but this is a little vague. In the first place, then, he is supposed to have the control of the Viceroy's household and establishments, an expenditure amounting to about 100,000*l.* a year. Next, he is Lord Chamberlain—arranges levees, drawing-rooms, &c., and some curious questions he is called upon to settle! A short time ago a question was referred to me as to whether certain individuals were to be allowed to wear shoes in Government House. Yesterday morning I had a telegram from Sir Salar Jung to know whether he and the Nizam might appear at Delhi in carriages or must come on elephants. I venture to say the Lord Chamberlain was never perplexed with such questions. Then he has the patronage of about twenty-five regiments of infantry and fifteen of cavalry, which are supposed to be directly under the Viceroy. . . . Lastly, he is the Viceroy's confidential adviser, though not his official and responsible one on all army matters. Such are his supposed duties; but at the present moment I am just preparing to start on a confidential mission to the Khan of Khelat—quite contrary to all precedents of a military secretary's duties! This, however, is a secret at present.
>
> In about a month we start for a charming tour; through Kashmir, thence down the Punjab and Sindh frontier to

Kurachi, and so back by Bombay to Delhi, where we are to have great doings on the occasion of the proclamation of the Imperial title, and the greatest assemblage and finest spectacle ever seen in India.[7]

The allusion to the coming mission to Khelat brings us to the second move in the new frontier policy —the stationing of British troops at Quetta near the northern extremity of the Bolan Pass.[8] The conduct of this move was to be in Colley's hands, and in a letter written a little earlier we find further mention of it :

> Khelat affairs are standing over until the return of Sandeman's mission, when we can review our position there better. It seems to be the old question of whether to support a ruler whom you can make responsible for your frontier, or to ignore him and deal with the sub-tribes independently; the first policy answers best so long as you have a decent fellow to deal with, but breaks down when you get a hopeless blackguard—and that seems to be our position there now.[9]

This 'hopeless blackguard' was Mir Khodadad Khan, the ruler of Khelat, the general character of whose rule can be appreciated by an incident which marked its beginning. On the day of his proclamation as khan, the chiefs who had raised him to the dignity asked for a redress of grievances. Their camp lay below the battlements of the Khan's palace. His reply to the petition of rights was a general discharge of artillery into the tents of his sirdars. The officer whose name appears in the letter above quoted, Captain Robert Sandeman, the political agent

[7] Simla, September 10, 1876, to Miss Hamilton.

[8] In accordance with a treaty of more than twenty years' standing with the Ruler of Khelat.

[9] June 4, 1876, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

on the Punjab frontier, was a remarkable personality. His name is now identified with the system of conciliation and control of the border tribes which he practised so effectively in Baluchistan—methods essential to the permanent success of any forward policy.

In the original plan of action brought by Lord Lytton from England, Sir Lewis Pelly was to have visited Quetta on his road to Kabul, *via* the Bolan and Kandahar, and arrange with the Khan of Khelat that part of the new policy which had reference to Baluchistan. But when Lord Lytton reached Bombay it was found that Sandeman had already, under Lord Northbrook's orders, left for Khelat on a mission of mediation between the Khan and his sirdars. It was thought better to allow him to proceed, keeping, as we have seen in Colley's letter, an open mind as to subsequent action. Lord Lytton attached a special importance to negotiations with the Khan on account of the strategical value of Quetta, and decided to send Colley to join Sandeman at Khelat. Early in October he started from Simla. He carried with him a draft treaty embodying the new features of frontier policy which he was to present to the Khan for his signature. The incidents of the journey and its results cannot be better described than by passages from letters written at the time:

On the Indus: October 5.

The scenery is monotonous—a broad muddy stream with an occasional alligator or queer bird of some kind—pelicans, fish-hawks, &c., low mud banks, with tall reedy grass and occasional palm trees, and an unbroken flat as far as one can see. At night we run alongside the bank and make fast to it, and the Hindoos all land to cook and eat. When they

have done, the jackals come round and sit on their tails and howl in hideous chorus.[1]

Jacobabad: October 7.

I should be sorry to invest in house property here. The very existence of the place depends upon an embankment which has been built at an expense of some 8 lakhs, but has given way every time the Indus has touched it.

The British officer is a strange and very amusing creature. A young officer arrived here only this morning, fresh from Khelat, or at least from the Baluch Hills, among which he has been wandering for nearly two months. I at once got alongside him for news. His view of the political situation was comprised in the opinion that Khelat was 'the d——dest hole in the world,' and the people 'not a bad lot of beggars, but dirty, and d——d thieves.' But he had fished up nearly every pass and stream, and could tell me exactly what holes to go to for the biggest fish and what flies to catch them with. I couldn't make out that he had taken any escort or thought it necessary to trouble himself about the inhabitants in any way; and I believe a chap like that, if he could only be trained to keep his eyes open as well, could fish and loaf his way anywhere.[2]

Khelat: October 15.

We reached this last night after a rapid journey of five days from Jacobabad. Our kit could not keep up with us, so I shall not personally wait on the Khan till to-morrow evening; but as he has been uneasy ever since he heard that I was coming and there were various rumours about, I arranged with Sandeman that he should visit the Khan this afternoon, and let him know generally the character of the communication of which I was the bearer, as well as arrange for the delivery of your letter. This he has done, and reports a most satisfactory interview—the Khan delighted generally, anxious to meet you at Jacobabad, pleased at the idea of Delhi but rather afraid of the expense; very glad that the troops remain, grateful for the increased subsidy and the grant, but already trying to get as much out of it

[1] To Lord Lytton. [2] To Lord Lytton.

for his own pocket as possible; always finishing up with expressing his readiness to do the wishes of Government. Sandeman anticipates no serious difficulty with any of the clauses. . .

I have found Sandeman throughout most anxious to meet your wishes, raising no difficulties except where there seemed good reason, and at once setting himself to find a solution. . .

Orders have been issued for the Punjab Infantry to go to Quetta and hut themselves there; the cavalry, Sindh and Punjab, to go to Dadur; and the Sindh Infantry and guns to accompany the Khan as personal escort to Gundava. I suggested these movements because, while still apparently merely escort movements explained by the climate and the movements of Sandeman and the Khan, they are really bringing the troops into the positions we wish ultimately to hold.[3]

This last sentence held the whole matter of the new Baluchistan policy. The Punjab Infantry at Quetta marked a forward move.

Next day the State visit to the Khan was made. He and his Court are well described by the officer who acted as Persian interpreter to Colley:

Our way led up a narrow winding passage, 6 feet wide, with a slope of one in ten, which opened on a small courtyard 20 yards square. In one corner of this courtyard was a small doorway, and at it stood a rough square-built man, dressed in a rusty velvet garment, with a brown shawl turban on his head —this was the Khan. We were led into the reception room, a dirty room with an open balcony to the north-east, whence a wide view was had of the whole country. . .

Early the next morning the Khan held a review of his troops. There were about 1,200 on parade; most of the infantry fine swarthy fellows, the cavalry utterly useless, mounted on broken-down screws of every shape and size.

[3] To Lord Lytton.

The Khan himself was a sight to see, clad in a suit of chain armour, steel gauntlets on his arms, and a gold casque on his head. He rode a dun horse, its trappings covered with gold plates, its tail tied up in a knot fastened with a large gold knob set with jewels.[4]

The rapid journey of five days to Khelat, so briefly alluded to in Colley's letter to the Viceroy, had proved a very arduous undertaking. The heat was still fierce in the Sindhian desert, and the first stage of eighty miles across the blinding sands was a trying one. Horses had been posted at intervals of about fifteen miles, and the mouth of the Mullah Pass was reached by sunset. 'I did not feel the heat so much as I expected,' wrote Colley afterwards, 'but was made aware of it by my stirrup becoming so hot that it scorched and cracked the leather of my brown boots, and I had to keep shifting my foot.'

We had been variously allowed from six to ten days to do the journey in---one greybeard *did*, indeed, say *it could be* done in five days 'if we had Mahomed's winged horse'—but we did it easily in five days, the only difficulty being about our baggage. We had tents and bedding, but were never once able to use them on the march because they always arrived about four in the morning, just as we were preparing for our next march. . . .

Major Upperton was a very good travelling companion, always cheery and for pushing on. One place, however, tried us sorely. We had specially noted a place named Angera on our map—it was near the head of the pass, was printed in bigger letters than other places, and the name had a more civilised and Christian sound. Also we were met by letters saying that the Khan had recommended it for our halting-place, and that we should find supplies. Altogether we looked on it as a sort of haven, and the principal town of Baluchistan. We reached the last halt before it late in the

[4] Major Upperton's Journal.

afternoon, and found that our escort of Sindh horse, who were wonderfully good fellows, had made arrangements in case we should sleep there that night, but we scorned their offers and pushed forward for the comforts and luxuries of Angera. It soon got dark, and we lost our way over a wide desolate plain, and for several hours wandered, hunting fires which appeared and disappeared in the distance like will-o'-the-wisps. At last we made for one which was almost dying out, and found our escort, all sound asleep, sheltered as best they could against a bitter wind that was blowing over the plain, with their horses picketed round them and cowering; not a tree, house, or anything in sight—a picture of the most utter desolation imaginable.

We waked up the men. 'Where's Angera?' 'Here, sahib.' 'But where's the town?' 'There is none, sahib.' 'Where are the fig trees?' (Angera means 'place of figs.') 'There are none, sahib.' 'How do you know it is Angera?' 'They told us we should find the remains of a mud wall,' pointing to a bit of mud about two feet high. 'Then why is it called Angera?' 'Don't know, sahib. I suppose one day a man sat down here and called it Angera.' 'Where are the tents and provisions sent out for us by the officers?' 'At Schrab, sahib, fifteen miles further on.' 'And the supplies collected by the Khan?' 'Also at Schrab, I believe, sahib.' You may imagine the length of our countenances, having eaten nothing since breakfast. 'Can you give us anything to eat?' 'Here,' calling another man, 'get that meat that you have tied up in your handkerchief and cook it for the sahibs.' The poor fellows did their very best for us, insisting on giving up their blankets, and when they found the meat was too tough for us strongly recommended the gravy, a compound of hot ghee, red pepper, and garlic, which they said we should find very tasty. The intense ludicrousness of the whole thing quite carried the day, and we literally laughed ourselves to sleep. . . .

Next morning we pushed on early to Schrab, and there found a nice little camp and a breakfast that made up for our previous night's fast. We were met there, too, by an officer of the Khan's, who said he had been sent down ex-

pressly to see to our comfort, and who placed himself, his possessions, and his life absolutely at disposal. We inquired after the supplies which the Khan had directed should be collected for us, and with great pomp he called up one of his attendants, who proceeded to unwind a cloth from round his waist, all tied into knots and little bundles. From one corner of this he produced a handful of pistachio nuts, from another sugar plums, from a third some parched corn, from a fourth about an ounce of tea, and from a fifth a little sugar. These he proceeded to lay out with much ceremony in little heaps on a white cloth, and then asked us to sit down and eat.

When we were going away he expressed his strong affection and admiration for Major Upperton and desire to give him some memento, and begged his acceptance of a greyhound which was with him. Major Upperton tried to decline without hurting his feelings, and explained that we were travelling and would not know what to do with it, but the gentleman insisted, and the dog was sent with us, following apparently very willingly. When we got to the next station, where we changed horses and escort, the dog trotted up to one of the men who called it. Major Upperton asked him what he was doing with the dog. 'Oh,' said the man, 'that's my dog, it only went over to Schrab yesterday with one of my comrades!' [5]

Colley possessed a singular power of concealing sickness or suffering. In the light and laughable account of that day's adventures at Angera and Schrab the reader looks in vain for any trace of bodily suffering; but, turning to a journal kept by the Major Upperton so frequently mentioned, I find that during the ride that day Colley was taken very ill. 'He expressed his fear,' wrote Upperton, 'that he shouldn't be able to go on, and he begged me—as the mission was all-important—to take all papers and go on without him; but I was not going to leave him alone with

[5] Quetta, October 25, 1876, to Lady Lytton.

a couple of sowars in this bare inhospitable country. So I wrote a letter in Persian to the Wali, ten or twelve miles distant across the hills, to ask for a litter and camels. When the sowar returned with some riding camels, I got Colley on to one, and we went on slowly, as the least jolting caused him great pain.'

On October 27, Colley and his companion were back at Jacobabad, having returned from Khelat by Quetta and the Bolan Pass. Next day he writes to Lord Lytton:

I returned here late last night, and have already telegraphed the general result. I send herewith the Khan's reply to your letter and his remarks on the draft treaty. It was his own wish to sign the draft in token of 'his being the servant of Government, and only anxious to obey their wishes,' and thoroughly understanding its contents. . . .

Sandeman thinks the Khan not naturally vicious or cruel, and quite ready to obey our Government, which he is shrewd enough to see has both the power and the inclination to help him, and that his worst acts have arisen from avarice and suspicion and fear. I think this estimate a fairly correct one. The people certainly generally hate him, but I think it is rather on account of his want of kingly qualities than his actual oppression. I believe a good kingly ruler like some of our Plantagenets might oppress them ten times as much and yet remain popular. . . .

I found Sandeman nervously anxious about the position I should take up, and the Khan's vakil also watching very carefully to see our relative positions; so as I found Sandeman perfectly loyal and only too glad to learn your wishes, and as he referred every point to me that arose between himself and the Khan, I avoided all possible appearance of interference. At Sandeman's desire I handed the letter to him in Durbar to deliver to the Khan instead of delivering it direct myself; and when after the Durbar the Khan wanted to talk business I went out with the rest of the

officers. I hope you won't think that I went too far in this matter, but there seemed to me nothing to be gained by remaining, as every point was carefully discussed between Sandeman and myself before he saw the Khan, and again afterwards, and my presence could only have embarrassed him. Moreover, seeing there was an anxiety on the part of the Sindh officers to make out my arrival to be a snub to him, I made it a point to support him openly, and could not do so better than by myself publicly going out with the rest of the officers as a merely ornamental (?) part of the ceremony! and leaving him to transact the business. . . .

Sandeman I think you will find much what you expect from his letters, argumentative but energetic, an enthusiast in his work, really anxious to carry out the wishes of his superiors, with a genuine sympathy for these rude races and their ways of thought, which enables him to listen patiently for hours to their grievances and thoroughly to enter into them, and a great deal of native shrewdness in dealing with them, as well as in escaping from many of his arbitration difficulties by making the people appear to settle them among themselves. He has, I think, done really good service in many ways, and is doing his best to shake up the Khan and his sirdars together, and re-establish a little confidence and friendship between them. . . .

He really appreciates your having written to him directly and fully as you did, and assured me many times that your letter and my visit were a greater relief to him than he could describe, and that my visit so far from weakening had very much strengthened his position with both Khan and sirdars. . . .

From Khelat I went to Mustung and Quetta to select in concert with him a camping ground for the troops, and thence along the Bolan Pass to Dadur and Mitri. With the exception of Kutchi and two or three fertile valleys such as those of Khelat, Mustung, and Quetta, the country may be described as one stony waste of mountain and plain. Quetta is by far the finest of these valleys. It is about twelve miles long by half that wide, enclosed by fine bold precipitous mountains, rising to over 10,000 feet, very

fertile, and well watered, both by a moderate-sized river and by mountain springs. A great part of it is now under cultivation, and with a little peace and management it will soon all be so, and it is dotted with villages, most of them surrounded with orchards of apricot, mulberry, apple, and other fruit trees, giving it a very refreshing look after the desolation of the plains around. After visiting it I am more strongly in favour than ever of making it the principal military station on all grounds—political, military, and sanitary. The people seemed delighted at the prospect of having our troops among them again. They all came crowding out to show us where the troops had been in former times, where the best water is, &c. . . .

The town itself is very much like Khelat on a smaller scale; indeed, the sketch enclosed of one of these towns would do for almost any. An outer mud wall with round towers and two or three gateways, enclosing a space of perhaps half a mile by one-third, covered by the town; and in the middle a steep mound rising a hundred feet or so, on which is built the Miri, a fortified palace, picturesque in outline and under certain effects, but hideous in colour, the whole town, walls, hill, and Miri being simply mud. I chose a site for the troops about three-quarters of a mile from the town, well watered, and fairly sheltered from the bitter north wind. With three companies in the Miri it would be unassailable except with artillery, and with a mountain gun or two added I believe all the armies of Central Asia could not take it, as it entirely commands an absolutely flat and shelterless plain for miles round. I think it might be worth while negotiating with the Khan for its purchase or occupation. . .

Thence I went down the Bolan Pass with Sandeman and saw on the spot the arrangements made for its security. . . . Some hundred of the greatest villains of the neighbourhood are now paid to see the convoys safe through instead of plundering them, and by finding employment for headmen of various villages every scoundrel who could squeeze an oar in, in any raid, now gets a share of plunder without it. We were received by Alladina Kurd, the man immediately in charge of the pass—a noted scoundrel, a sort

of fat Rob Roy—covered with wounds, the plunderer *par excellence* of the pass, who admits that some of his happiest days were when he sat on the top of a rock with a long-range rifle, picking off the bullocks which were drawing the Khan's guns in the pass below, and now with a leer says he is growing thin from anxiety and care for the protection of the pass—he would make four ordinary men now. . . .

The Baluchs are a wild-looking lot, with their long curly hair worn hanging unkempt over their shoulders, their swords, knives, and little brass-studded buckler, and small active well-bred mares. But you cannot imagine a greater contrast than our friends Nabba and Jheend, with their handsome stately persons, picturesque costumes, and magnificent jewels, and the little Khan. It certainly will do him a deal of good to see the world and other chiefs besides himself, and I think Sandeman, though very anxious that he should go to Delhi, only half likes showing off his *protégé* in such company. The most picturesque scenes we had were at a concert at Mustung, where we sat out on a terrace of the Miri, round a great bonfire, with a circle of these wild-looking fellows round us, and a gang of minstrels, whose instrumental music was really very fair, though their vocal attempts were harsh and discordant; and who gave us a number of their national airs and songs till very late at night.

So ended the mission to Khelat—the first step in the advance of our outposts beyond the valley of the Indus. A letter written by Colley two years later, on the eve of the Afghan War, summarises the causes and the practical advantages of the measures adopted in Khelat:

The condition of affairs when we came out here was this: In Sindh Lord Northbrook had at last and most rightly, as I believe, broken through the non-intervention policy. Utter anarchy in Khelat, making itself felt on our own borders, had led to a series of raids and disturbances,

[6] Jacobabad, October 28, 1876, to Lord Lytton.

which practically left him the choice of one of three courses: either to submit to constant aggression and disturbance, or to march an army into Khelat, or to interfere in a more friendly way and endeavour to bring about peace in the country. He chose the last course, and just before we arrived Major Sandeman had started for Khelat as a friendly arbiter, but with a force of a thousand men at his back to give some weight to his arbitration. . . . I cannot understand how any one can suppose it possible to return to absolute non-intervention after such very active intervention as that of Sandeman's. Had Sandeman's force been withdrawn, the very instant they were out of the country the old disputes would have recommenced more bitterly than ever, and both sides would have cursed us, and with cause, for useless meddling.

We took a different line. We believed that an opportunity had presented itself of substituting a friendly, peaceful, and prosperous rule for the utter anarchy and devastation that had prevailed in Baluchistan for nearly twenty years, and at the same time of securing a position of enormous value strategically for the defence of our southern border. Militarily speaking, Quetta covers 500 miles of our Trans-Indus frontier from the sea to Dera Ghazi Khan.

The policy of the measure has been much disputed, and is, of course, a fair subject for discussion. Of its practical results, however, I can personally speak. During the three years preceding Sandeman's mission hardly a month passed without some raid on our borders, and the Bolan Pass was absolutely closed. During the two years following there has not been a single raid of any sort or kind. The Bolan Pass is perfectly safe, and has been traversed bythousands of caravans. . . . And the tableland of Baluchistan, which then could barely support Sandeman's small garrison of one thousand men, is now able to furnish without difficulty several months' supplies for the force of ten thousand men now being collected there. Were matters now in Baluchistan as they were when we came out, so far from being prepared tomorrow to commence our advance from Quetta into Afghanistan, we should still be collecting in the plain of Kutchi and

preparing for the difficult operation of forcing the Bolan Pass. I may add that not only have the Baluch sirdars enthusiastically supported Sandeman in all our complications with the Amir, and the Khan placed all his supplies at our disposal, but even the more distant ruler of Lus Beyla has just offered his army for service against the Amir if necessary.[7]

More than twenty years have passed since these events occurred. Frontier questions and forward policies are still in active dispute among us, but an element always present in old solutions of kindred problems, and unthought of only because of its certainty, has latterly been forcing itself into recognition as the real determining factor of the question. All these extensions of frontier, new areas of influence, additional responsibilities of empire—call them as we may, or prove their necessity as we like—remain fresh drafts drawn upon the home strength of the nation as it stands represented by its army. The bank which has to honour these cheques is the British soldier. Some thirty years ago, Carlyle, looking round upon his compatriots, declared he found only one honest man among them—the drill sergeant; his brother, the recruiting sergeant, seems to-day to be a still more important pillar of the State.

After two days of incessant writing at Jacobabad, Colley and his companion mounted horses again on October 30, and, following the frontier through Sindh and the Punjab, reached Peshawur on November 20, having ridden 800 miles in twenty-one days.

[7] November 20, 1878, to Colonel Brackenbury.

CHAPTER X

INDIA IN 1877

Rumours of war—Plan of campaign on the Oxus—The Delhi pageant—Pelly Conference—Merv and the Central Asian Question—Famine in Madras—Frontier disturbances—Discussion on frontier re-organisation—Home.

THE letters written by the Viceroy to his secretary during the period of the Khelat Mission are very touching evidences of how deeply he felt the untiring service that was given to him. On November 16 he wrote:

It is useless to take an epistolary shot at you on the wing, but I hope you will find this letter on your arrival at Peshawur. If so, let its first words be words of welcome to a place of rest—well won if brief. Cordial thanks for your wearisome labours of the last month, and grateful congratulations on their complete success. I fear that you have undergone many and severe hardships, severe even for such a seasoned soldier as yourself, although you make so light of them. Knowing your optimistic way of seeing and putting things, I read (*horresco referens!*) between the lines of your letters evidence of trials to the physical man beyond the imagination of the author of Job. *Mais il faut souffrir pour être beau*, and nothing could be more beau than the completeness of your diplomatic success.[1]

And then he proceeds to give his friend items of news from all parts of the world of politics. From London Lord Salisbury has started for the Conference

[1] From Lord Lytton.

at Constantinople, not sanguine of a pacific result, for talk must end when Russia asks the Porte for guarantees which will not be given. The Cabinet has made up its mind to fight, even single-handed, if Constantinople be menaced—but what will it consider a menace to Constantinople? Meanwhile they inquire from home what can be done to strike 'a rapid and effective blow at Russia,' and raise the Central Asian populations against her the moment war is declared.

Nothing could have emphasised more strongly the importance of a friendly Afghanistan. The nearest khanate was about 600 miles from our frontier. Between us and Bokhara lay some of the loftiest mountain passes and the wildest fighting tribes on the globe. And the blow suggested was to be a rapid and effective one! The letter proceeds to comment upon an official memorandum which

> admits that everything turns on Kabul, and that an Afghan alliance is essential to rapid operations, and yet extols the 'prudent policy of the last four years'! As regards Kabul, Sher Ali and his minister Nur Mohamed Shah have simultaneously been taken ill; I at first thought their illness a sham. Anyhow, they declare themselves too unwell to discuss or transact business, and thus our negotiations are still most vexatiously at a standstill. Meanwhile Kauffmann is concentrating carriage at Charjui for an early march on Merv, so I think we are likely to have hot work ere long.

All this, and more, is written in great haste at Mahdipur, where the Viceroy has arrived 'ten minutes ago after a delightful voyage down the Ravi River on mussocks [water-skins]. We are all well and happy, in spite of clouds on the political horizon.'

It was not a bed of roses, this position of Viceroy.

The frontier policy which had already divided Lord Lytton's Council could not always command the united support of the Indian Council at home. Famine was threatening Bombay and still more seriously Madras. An embarrassing agitation against the Imperial assemblage about to be held at Delhi had also sprung up in the Anglo-Indian press, the coming scarcity in Southern India being advanced as a reason for retrenchment. This great assemblage was only a month distant, but at any moment all its festivities and magnificence might be marred by the outbreak of hostilities. For while Colley was galloping along the frontier from Jacobabad to Peshawur, Lord Beaconsfield on November 9 made his celebrated Guildhall speech, and spoke of England being prepared not for a war of one campaign but of many. At this moment the nation was very near a declaration of war with Russia, the date was all but fixed, and in the plan of hostilities India was to play a most important part. A month later, however, the likelihood of immediate fighting seems to have passed away.

The intimate relations which eight months of close intercourse had developed between the Viceroy and Colley seemed to gather increased strength from the difficulties and dangers of the situation both in and out of India. Lord Lytton realised that, no matter what forces opposed his policy, or complicated its prosecution, he was always certain of finding in his military secretary a support as loyal as man could offer, and an amount of assistance possible only under the conditions of physical strength and mental power which Colley possessed in such rare combination. When he met the Viceroy at Peshawur in November,

he had ridden in thirty days from Khelat *via* Quetta and Jacobabad, a total distance of 1,100 miles. He had inspected all the frontier stations *en route*, had written valuable reports and letters, and had still sufficient vital energy left to frame a complete plan for action on the Oxus in the event of a declaration of war against Russia—showing in detail whence the force was to be drawn, how commanded, how organised; its strength, composition, transport, commissariat; its medical, ordnance, and engineer equipments: the number of extra officers required to raise native contingents beyond the frontier, the collection of supplies in front and in rear, the garrisons necessary for the line of communications, depôts, and camping-places—all thought out and minutely laid down. In reply to Lord Lytton's letter he had enclosed this paper and added:

As it seems to me that the Secretary of State may expect some more definite idea of what we can do, or propose to do, in the event of war being declared, . . . I venture to put in the enclosed. It seems to me equally necessary to make the preliminary preparations under any circumstances. If the Amir is friendly we can go ahead cheerily—if frightened into a doubtful neutrality we can go ahead carefully—if he declares against us we can halt and consider our position![2]

A letter home, however, shows that Colley realised the serious and difficult character of any such operations:

I must say I dread any military operations under our present *régime*. Beyond the ordinary flying column organisation which you may remember in India, there is nothing prepared.

. . . A memorandum written after the Abyssinian expedition, which treats the general transport as quite a secondary

[2] November, 1876.

and unimportant affair, is a curious illustration of how little the conditions of a distant expedition in a poor country are understood by men whose whole experience has been gained in a rich country abounding with supplies and transport. Fancy starting on an expedition to the Oxus depending on your regimental transport![3]

Work of a very different nature was now at hand. The great pageant at Delhi was to begin on December 23. The programme was not yet completed, there were innumerable details to be gone through; everybody was asking questions; and Colley's duties in connection with the preparations took him to Delhi.

A page taken from his daily notebook reads in strong contrast to the overleaf one, which has dealt with the proposed expedition to Central Asia. The items range from the size of sundry elephants to the height (four feet five inches) of a page for the ceremony! Nor are the children forgotten at this remarkable Christmas time; there is an entry, 'Christmas for children—conjurer.'

Then a serious hitch threatened. Somehow or other Sindia had invited the Viceroy to a banquet, and a false report got abroad that the invitation was accepted; the whole place was in an uproar—to single out Sindia thus for an honour not paid to any other prince or governor would be to 'throw a bomb-shell into the assemblage.' 'Excuse a scrawl,' writes Colley in finishing a letter on this and a dozen other subjects, 'but I have six men at a time waiting to speak to me.'

Last, but not least, his old friend the Khan of Khelat was begging a good deal on the strength of the invitation to Delhi. There was a demand for ele-

[3] Delhi, December 15, 1876, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

phants and camels for 'a hundred men for the Khan of Khelat.' On the day of the ceremony the feudatory princes attending the assemblage were given banners; the Khan, being regarded as an ally, did not receive this token of vassalage. 'Only give me a banner,' he cried, 'and I too will be a vassal.'[4] For all that he no doubt often wished himself at home again; and as we read in the old travel-stained notebook of the multifarious duties of the military secretary, an impression grows that he too might have been glad to exchange the brilliant scene at Delhi for even the dreariest bivouac in Baluchistan.

In the midst of these ceremonial preparations came a letter from Sir Garnet Wolseley full of warlike rumour:

If a British force is sent to occupy these positions, I am afraid that I shall not be selected to command, but that some old gentleman will be given chief command. Of course you know that in any command I may obtain I expect you to play a very important *rôle*; so if the telegraph should at any time announce to you that I have been selected for any work, I shall expect you to join me, without any correspondence, forthwith. I should be very sorry to deprive Lord Lytton of your services, but in the event of an important war you could not be spared for your present duties in India.[5]

And Colley answers:

Of course I am ready at any moment to rejoin my old chief in any possible capacity you think I can be of use —it was one of the conditions I made with Lord Lytton, and he knows that I mean it. It seems to me, however, that war is blowing over, for the present at least; but it is no use discussing things that will be decided long before you receive this. But it was a real pleasure to me to receive

[4] Life of Sir Robert Sandeman.
[5] October 25, 1876, from Sir Garnet Wolseley.

your reminder and think that you still wished to have me under you if anything turned up—and I hope I need not assure you that I am not ambitious as to position, but would gladly serve in *any* position under you where you thought me useful.

We are all hard at work at our Delhi preparations; the camp already looks very fine, and the whole thing promises to be really magnificent.[6]

From Delhi the Viceroy proceeded to Calcutta, but the change brought no respite to the secretary. On March 15, he wrote home an 'account of a day's work here,' and records a score of letters on every conceivable business written before he dressed at eight. He always made a practice of rising early and thus securing from two to three hours' work before breakfast. In India these morning hours were generally the only part of the day in which he could be free from incessant calls and interruptions, and it was upon those hours that he depended for his more serious work. On this recorded day which began at 5.30 A.M., he had been discussing State concerns till after twelve the night before. Amongst the miscellany of business, ranging from high affairs of policy to an interview ('rather a stormy one') with the viceregal confectioner, there are two entries of telegrams from Peshawur and long conversations thereon with his chief.

These telegrams referred to the conference then proceeding at Peshawur. The Amir, while declining to receive Lord Lytton's embassy and to attend the Delhi meeting, had sent an envoy, Syud Nur Mahomed, to meet Sir Lewis Pelly and discuss the means of improving the relations between the two

[6] Delhi, December 15, 1876, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

Governments. It was not the first visit of Nur Mahomed to India. In 1873, he had come as special envoy to Simla and urged a treaty of defensive alliance to which the Home Government would only authorise an ambiguous answer. The meeting at Peshawur had been agreed to by Lord Lytton conditionally on the acceptance by the Amir of a preliminary stipulation admitting British officers to reside as political agents in Afghanistan; failing which the Government of India was not prepared to allow the conference to proceed. But the envoy announced himself to be without authority to negotiate on that basis. He, however, took the opportunity to review, in a sense unfavourable to us, the relations between his Government and ours during the past seven years.

At this time there was a prevalent expectation throughout Asia that the rupture imminent between the Sultan and the Czar would lead to war between England and Russia. But the Amir at Kabul continued to receive emissaries from the Russian Governor of Turkestan, and sought to inflame against us the fanaticism of the Mahomedan tribes.

Throughout the protracted discussions at Peshawur the Afghan envoy was suffering from a mortal complaint, and his death, on March 26, afforded the Viceroy an opportunity to close negotiations which had at least the result of removing all doubt as to the alienation and distrust our policy in recent years had developed in the Amir's mind.

Meanwhile in other parts of the world events of great importance were taking place. A formidable Russian army had been already collected for the passage of the Pruth, and in June 1877 it crossed the Danube and directed its advance towards the Balkans.

At first it seemed that the campaign was to be only a military promenade to Adrianople, but it was soon evident that there would be much fighting ere that point was reached by the invader.

Nowhere was the progress of the war watched with keener interest than at Simla by the Viceroy and his Council. At any moment it might afford us a chance, more favourable than we could expect again, of checking Russian advance in Central Asia. Up to this time the movement of Russia towards the Afghan frontier had followed two lines. From Orenburg she had reached the Oxus, while from the Caspian she had pushed along the Persian frontier to Kizil Arvat, menacing Merv, the last stronghold of the Tekhi Turkomans. Between these weak extended lines lay, as yet untraversed, the waterless wastes of the Kara Kum. In the separation and isolation of these two advances lay the weakness of the moment. But, given the necessary time, Russia was certain to connect her then desert-divided columns. Merv is a central point between the Hindu Kush and the Caspian. Its history and traditions have made it a notable landmark to Eastern peoples. It was the cradle of much of that strange and fierce eruptive power of the East which, under various dynasties, Ghaznavide, Seljukian, or Ottoman, had, from the eleventh to the sixteenth century, cast forth successive hordes to devastate the South and West. And though the glory of old Merv had long departed, and all the wide country round it, once the garden of the East, had changed into lone wastes where nomad tribes pitched their far-apart encampments by streams shrinking yearly into feebler currents—still, with a return of organised government and settled security

much of the old fertility might reappear; and that fruitfulness which had once made Sogdiana a theme of praise to Eastern writers might cover again this long-neglected region. For the great features of the land are still the same. Three lofty ranges of snow-clad mountains hold it as in a frame. On the fourth side the seas of Aral and the Caspian partly fill the northern boundary. From these three mountain ranges two great rivers and many smaller streams descend into the lower plain; but their waters require the careful control of scientific labour, or else summer inundations and winter droughts must become destructive agencies of flood and famine. Should a civilised nation once reach the springheads of these streams, the plains of Central Asia might become again the seat of a populous empire, and the birthplace of the hardiest soldiers that had ever gone forth to the conquest of the world. At the present time Merv is a station on the railway from the Caspian to Samarkand. The two lines of Russian advance have long been united, but twenty years ago it seemed to the Indian authorities that if war broke out with Russia a blow might still be struck which would long postpone the junction, and roll indefinitely back the tide of Central Asian conquest.

The occupation of Kizil Arvat by Russia in 1877 drew the immediate attention of the Indian Government to Merv. And I find the subject dealt with in one of a collection of memoranda each of which bears the signature 'G. P. C.' That from which we take the following quotations reviews the whole field of Central Asian politics, forecasts the connection of the two lines of Russian advance, and points out the consequences that must gradually ensue to India.

At present, writes Colley in June 1877, the position of Russia in Central Asia

is dangerously weakened by the great gap which separates her eastern forces from the Caspian Sea and army of the Caucasus, her natural and formidable base for future operations in Central Asia. Hence her advanced posts on the Oxus, though within 800 miles of an excellent base, are still practically dependent on Orenburg, distant more than 1,800 miles; and the army of the Caucasus, with its trained soldiers and accumulated war material, can take no part in any operations undertaken by Russia in the khanates or towards Afghanistan. It may be assumed, therefore, that however peaceable the intentions of the Russian Government may be, and however genuine its assurances, its military commanders on the spot will continue to neglect no opportunity and spare no effort to push forward towards Merv, and secure a position that can enable them to connect their eastern with their western spheres of operation.

It is not, therefore, as an unexpected act of aggression, but as an important step in a long-foreseen and almost inevitable movement, that I view with anxiety the present Russian occupation of Kizil Arvat.

. . . . . .

The importance which the Government of India has at all times attached to Merv is greatly increased by the progress of events in Afghanistan. . . . The practical result of the inactivity policy for some time pursued is that during the last four years British influence has been steadily replaced by Russian influence at Kabul; and we can now no longer reckon on the prevalence of British interests at Herat as a counterpoise to the presence of Russian power at Merv.

. . . . . .

The danger we anticipate to India is not that arising from an adventurous Russian invasion. It is the far more serious danger involved in the extension of Russian influence over Afghanistan, till that State becomes a mere tool in the hands of Russia. If this happens, as ere long it must if not

averted by action on our part, then our Indian frontier armaments, instead of being calculated, as they now are, to resist mere mountain tribes without organisation or combined action, will have to be recast on a scale fit to cope with organised and combined attacks supported by European skill, arms, money, and possibly even troops. India itself will then become exposed to an influence rival and hostile to our own, and with all the prestige of success upon its side. Every passing cloud of disagreement in European politics will at once make itself felt throughout the length of our frontier, and send a thrill of hope to every discontented mind in India; and we shall be bound beyond escape to accept in a hopelessly unfavourable position the struggle for supremacy in the East whenever that struggle is forced upon us.

Later on he speaks of 'the re-establishment of friendly relations and of our due influence in Afghanistan' as 'the best solution of the problem.'[7] But a letter on the same subject to Sir Garnet Wolseley expresses grave doubts of any reconciliation being possible at that moment, although, when he first came out, he had 'believed in the sanguine hopes entertained of bringing the Amir round.' 'I think it so important,' he writes, 'that we should realise fully that we have no influence at present at Kabul; that the result of our long policy of "masterly inactivity" has been the absolute alienation of the Amir. . . . We should also realise how this affects our position in every detail.' In the same letter, referring to some military authorities who urged an immediate invasion of Afghanistan, he adds, 'I cannot go with them,' and in several paragraphs applicable chiefly to the

[7] In 1878 he wrote: 'What we had really to fear was the gradual establishment at Kabul, by friendly means and a policy more active than our own, of an influence hostile to us. This is precisely what has happened.'

situation of the moment he justifies his disagreement, concluding, 'Therefore I strongly deprecate an immediate invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.'

The final proposal of the despatch, for which Colley's note furnished some material, was that selected officers should be sent to Merv to gauge the strength and dispositions of the Turkoman tribes in relation to the Powers surrounding them—a proposal, however, which came to nothing. 'I am glad to say,' wrote Colley in August, 'the Russian retreat from Kizil Arvat has given us more breathing time, for I never expected the proposal to send officers to Merv would be sanctioned. Luck and the Turks combined seem likely to pull us out of a difficulty.'[8]

It is interesting to compare the decisions of Governments—changing often from day to day—affected as they almost inevitably must be by transient political incident, with carefully considered schemes built upon foundations lying well below the shifting surface of everyday occurrence. When the Merv despatch reached England, a change of estimate had taken place at home as to the offensive power of Russia. A dogged Turkish Pacha had suddenly broken in on the flank of the Russians between the Danube and the Balkans, and, squatting down at an obscure town called Plevna, had so burrowed and battened all the ridges and villages around that every attempt to dislodge him had failed. It was one of those events in war which are the surprises of that great game of chance. It afforded no measure of the real power of Russia, or even of the relative strength of the rival combatants in this war, but it was hailed in England as proof that the power of Russia for

[8] August 29, 1877, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

offensive warfare was delusive, and that her whole military administration was a sham. A few months earlier, English statesmen were spending sleepless nights in prospect of Russia sweeping down upon Constantinople; they were ready to go to war in Central Asia at the mere mention of the passage of the Pruth. But now this temporary Turkish triumph at Plevna had turned the current of their fervour, and Russian armaments began to be rated as low as before their power had been exaggerated. The Merv despatch was judged accordingly to be a 'nightmare,' and its conclusions to be fabrics elaborately raised on a foundation of imaginary danger which had vanished even while it was being built.

Almost at the time that the Merv despatch had drawn forth this somewhat sarcastic reply, and that Ministers were speaking of the complete collapse of Russia as a great military Power, an officer then holding an official position in London wrote to Colley as follows:

> We expect to hear of Plevna capitulating before long—at least all the Russian papers declare that it will soon be starved out. It is a curious fact that the vast majority of the people here in England, down to the lowest classes, are all for the Turks, and very anti-Russian; and yet the Government, which theoretically represents the majority of the people, are *afraid* to make a stand for what they know to be British interests of great magnitude—namely, the preclusion of ships of war from the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.
>
> What a collection of cowards and ignorants the next generation will vote us when they find themselves obliged to fight at a vast disadvantage for what we might have secured easily, perhaps even without war at all, had we had the courage to say to these accursed Tartars from the North,

'If you cross the Pruth, we shall declare war with you'! Oh for the days of Pitt, or even of Palmerston![9]

All this was more than twenty years ago, and I will here give from a journal of to-day the following account by a recent traveller in Central Asia of Russian progress and intentions in that part of the world:

The lecturer said they could not but yield a tribute of praise to the firm, humane, and consistent policy which, within a few years, had introduced complete order and security into the wilds of Central Asia; to the masterly statesmanship which had changed warlike tribes and the fanatical town populations into peaceful subjects of the Great White Czar; and to the steady and well-directed enterprise which was gradually extending to these regions the blessings of science and civilisation. Referring to the possibilities of a Russian advance on India, the lecturer said he had taken great pains to elicit official and private opinion. He had come to the conclusion that the Russians regarded this conquest of India as quite feasible. They had also a strong conviction that all Asia must eventually fall under their influence. This conviction was based partly on the success which had hitherto attended their arms in Asia.

From the days of Alexander to those of Napoleon, the conquest of India had been the dream of every great world conqueror. Since the rise of Islam, it had been the aim of successive Mohammedan tribes who won for themselves the supremacy of Central Asia. The Russians regarded themselves as the legitimate successors of those Central Asian conquerors, and, reasoning that what had been accomplished so often before by Arabs, Afghans, Mongols, Persians, could be accomplished again, they had come to look on India as their goal.

There can indeed be little doubt as to the accuracy

[9] November 15, 1877, from Sir Garnet Wolseley.

of the forecast of Russian movement which actuated the frontier policy of that time.

In the midst of these far-reaching projects, there came a rude reminder from Southern India that the feet of the great Imperial idol were but of clay. A second monsoon had failed, drought had followed drought, and famine had overspread famine. In the streets of Madras, in the mud hovels of inland villages, in the forests whither they had wandered to live on roots and leaves, along the ghauts and the dusty tracks, the dead—skeletons before they died—lay thick upon the land. A million of people were on the relief works. Another million were receiving subsistence allowance. The deaths recorded from starvation in a month were 120,000, and perhaps as many more had dropped where no human record could number their bodies.

The Madras famine is reaching such dimensions that I think it almost certain we shall have to go down there at once. It is the very hottest time of the year, and the trip will be a trying one—not to me, for, so far as I have yet had the opportunity of judging, I am supremely indifferent to heat—but to the Viceroy. But, as he himself feels most strongly, affairs have got to that state that personal considerations ought not to affect him for a minute.[1]

On August 16 the Viceroy, accompanied by his Famine Minister and other high officials, left Simla for Madras. The Duke of Buckingham, then Governor of the southern presidency, met the viceregal party at Raichore, and on August 29 the Governor-General entered the city of Madras in great state.

The next three weeks were spent in Madras and

[1] August 5, 1877, to Miss Hamilton.

Mysore, and on September 21 the Viceroy started on his return to Simla. His visit had undoubtedly been of great benefit; a better organisation had been introduced into the famine administration; and, above all human assistance in this fight against Nature, had come Nature herself to the rescue. Copious rains had fallen south of the Godavery, and when the viceregal party recrossed the boundary of the Madras Presidency the first signs of returning vegetation were beginning to show themselves over the desolate land. Colley's letters give some idea of Lord Lytton's embarrassments at this time.

You may have seen a good deal of discussion in the English papers as to Lord Lytton's action at Madras. It was a difficult problem to deal with, in many ways, but I believe that the result of his visit was not only an immense financial saving—that can be proved in black and white—but a great saving of life and strengthening of the hands of the local officers in dealing with the famine; at least I frequently get letters to that effect from officers on the spot. The 'Times,' as regards Indian matters, is in the hands of a school which Lord Lytton has been attacking, and consequently is bitterly opposed to him, and I expect that to the end of the chapter they will abuse everything he does. But if he is able to see out his Viceroyalty, I shall be very glad to let his work be judged by results; the only thing I fear is any accident removing him while everything is still in a transitional state and cannot be fairly tested.

I have had a very fair allowance of travelling. I had got as far as Umballa on our way home from Madras when I was sent on without a day's rest to Peshawur and the North-Western Frontier, in consequence of the unsatisfactory state of affairs there, to meet and confer with Sir Richard Pollock and the frontier generals, and visit the disturbed parts.[2]

[2] Simla, October 22, 1877, to Miss Hamilton.

For some months raids on the frontier of the Punjab had been more than usually prevalent. He writes on this subject to Sir Garnet Wolseley:

The present Punjab system seems to be, not to attempt seriously to stop raids, but, as soon as they mount up, to punish them by 'punitive expeditions' which burn a few villages and generally suffer more loss than they inflict. The system the Viceroy wishes to work is to improve the frontier defence, so as to punish raids when attempted, and put a stop to them, and so to punitive expeditions generally; but if expeditions are unavoidable, then to make them telling; not attacking unless a fair chance offers of surprise and of bringing their fighting force to bay.[3]

In another letter on the same subject, I find mention of a name destined soon to become prominent in frontier matters, and later on to be the central figure in a great tragedy:

I am not the least disposed to run down the Punjab: I think it has produced some admirable men, and great results. But I cannot admit it has the perfect frontier organisation they try to make out.

A very good illustration of the old school which has held sway here, and the new school which Lord Lytton is trying to encourage, is to be found in two proposals for a military expedition to punish a small section of a tribe, and one village in particular, for an outrage lately committed. Cavagnari, the deputy commissioner, a man whom Lord Lytton has rather brought forward lately and quite one of the best frontier officers we have, proposes to make a forced march of about thirty miles with a picked force (principally cavalry and mountain artillery), get *behind* the village before daylight, surround it or attack it from the rear, and capture all the men, and be off before any general alarm is given. X. and Y., both old frontier officers, propose to assemble a much larger force and attack the village *in front*—because they

[3] September 5, 1877.

say the ground there is favourable. Of course, as soon as the fighting men in the village think they have had enough, they quietly slip out behind and leave us the proud possessors of a lot of empty stone huts.

The tribes are getting very troublesome and I think will soon oblige us to give them some severe lessons—though one would rather wait till our relations with the Amir are better defined.[4]

What with conflicting authorities within the frontier and pressure from the tribes without it, a reorganisation of frontier administration had for some time seemed desirable. To promote this object, and in immediate reference to a Jowaki disturbance which the local authorities had not succeeded in suppressing, Lord Lytton despatched Colley on September 23 to Peshawur, which place he reached on the 28th. To Peshawur also had come the various officials in authority on the frontier—the commissioner, the commandant of the Punjab Frontier Force, the general commanding the Peshawur district, and Major Cavagnari, the deputy commissioner. A long conference took place on the 29th; writing an account of it to Lord Lytton, Colley, after describing his own proposals for dealing with the Jowakis, continues:

I expounded your general views on punitive measures—viz., a strong dislike to the usual 'British raid' and village burning; a desire to see such effective measures of defence taken as would in the long run secure prompt punishment overtaking raiders, and thus often avoid the necessity of any other punitive measures; and a determination not to let troops run in and run out again of the hills, fired at as they retire. I said you would rather hold a mile only, but hold it till the tribes admitted their inability to turn you out and gave in, than penetrate twenty miles but have to run out again.

[4] August 29, 1877, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

They all accepted the principle that the occupation of a point in tribal territory which the tribes cannot turn you out of, but feel bound in honour to attack, is not only the severest punishment to their pride, but is the most likely way of inflicting loss on their fighting men. The proposed operations against the Jowakis are based upon this.

. . . Broadly, Cavagnari is thoroughly with you. Letters which I have seen show me how thoroughly he has grasped every principle. His only failing, perhaps, is that he is a little disposed to be too enterprising and vigorous.[5]

The conference resulted in a general acceptance of these views—'in favour,' as Colley expressed it, 'of the short clutch and tight hold, as against the long reach and run home.' We can trace the results and practical value of the measures he recommended later on, when we read of 'the satisfactory termination of the Jowaki business and the successful result of Cavagnari's surprise movement on Sapri;'[6] and again, 'Another most successful surprise expedition of Cavagnari's has now satisfactorily disposed of the Utman Khel affair.'[7] A letter from Colley congratulating Cavagnari on these successes is interesting for many reasons.

Late as it is, I must ask leave to send my most hearty congratulations on the brilliant success of your two surprises. It is not often a man has the opportunity and the luck to be able to give effect so thoroughly to his views—to justify by practical experience the opinions he has maintained against much opposition. And I do most sincerely hope that you have given them a lesson in irregular warfare which was badly wanted, and by which I trust they will profit.

What you say about the breech-loader and its influence on the trans-frontier tribes was also very interesting to me,

[5] Kohat, October, 1877, to Lord Lytton.

[6] Calcutta, March 1, 1878, from Lord Lytton.

[7] Calcutta, March 26, 1878.

and I cannot tell you what a satisfaction it is to me to find that my somewhat theoretical views and your practical experience tend exactly in the same direction. As regards any views I may have expressed, I have already heard many things put down to me which I did not say, and I certainly never said that I could take 500 men anywhere through the Afridi country. What I did say, and what I am inclined to maintain, is that 500 men is as large a force as can be usefully employed in one column in such rugged country; that is to say, that with a total force of 2,000 men or more, I would break them up into small columns; that 500 men with breech-loaders could ordinarily overcome any opposition they would meet with, and, indeed, would be as many as could be brought profitably into action on one spot; and, in any case, could hold their ground till relieved by other columns. Would not your experience go with me in this?

I cannot help laughing now when I recall all the impossibilities we were told of—impossible to get the guides across that rugged country at night—impossible to get past the villages without being discovered, and intimation sent of your movements—impossible to surprise the village itself.

I agree most heartily in all you say about the gain of proving how little formidable this great Afridi bugbear really is, and how little cohesion there is among their tribes. Of course every one knows that to occupy by sheer force of arms a considerable tract of mountainous country occupied by wild fighting tribes is a troublesome business, and takes a good many men, and is a thankless task at best; but I am in hopes that among the younger men your views, illustrated as they are by practice, will gain ground, and that we shall soon see growing up a school of men who take the Afridi for what he is, not for an ideal warrior gifted with supernatural intelligence and valour; and who realise the advantages that superior arms, discipline, power of combination, and boundless resources give us.[8]

[8] June 4, 1878, to Major Cavagnari.

Here are Cavagnari's remarks in reply (June 1878): 'Your ideas about using troops in small detached bodies for mountain warfare are

These opinions are of even greater interest at the present time than when they were written. The possession of modern arms by the Afridis and other hillmen has changed many of the conditions of superiority we then had over these frontier tribes. But although that greater equality of weapon would probably affect the estimate as to numbers, it may be doubted whether it would modify the general tactical methods of mountain warfare above expressed.

A memorandum of Colley's upon the whole question of frontier reorganisation shows that the point really at issue was how circumlocution could be avoided, and the frontier policy, internal and external, from Kashmir to Kurachi, directed with a view

> to Imperial rather than local interests, and in the closest possible accord with the foreign policy of the home Government.
>
> . . . I think that a full consideration of the subject can lead to no other conclusion but that if our frontier policy is to have the required unity and vigour it should be placed in the hands of a specially chosen political agent, not the servant of a provincial Government, but communicating direct with the Governor-General.[9]

He develops in detail the new scheme, and writes with regard to the status and powers of the proposed agent, 'Seeing how closely allied our relations with Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and Kashmir are, all governed by the great Russian question, it seems that these relations should be concentrated in his hands.'

quite in accordance with those I have formed from what I have seen since I have been on this frontier. I have not yet seen the ground where more than 500 good light infantry men could work at any one object with advantage, and I was present once during a disaster where the pushing forward of more men than the nature of the ground justified was not only a positive disadvantage, but was a blunder.'

[9] Paper on Frontier Policy, 1877.

The border district was to be in the main a Trans-Indus district, but excluding Kurachi; Peshawur the headquarters, Baluchistan and Kashmir the wings; all the frontier troops to be under one command. This able document concludes:

> At present, supposing the Commandant at Kohat to desire the support of a couple of heavy guns from the batteries at Peshawur (as has recently been proposed), the course of procedure, supposing all parties to be at headquarters, is as follows. The Commandant at Kohat (40 miles from Peshawur) writes to the Commandant of the Punjab Frontier Force at Abbotabad (100 miles the other side of Peshawur), who writes to the Military Secretary Punjab Government at Lahore; who sends it to the Military Department Government of India at Calcutta; who refers it to the Commander-in-Chief; who sends it to the General commanding at Peshawur; who returns it to the Commander-in-Chief with his remarks. And so, having *four* times travelled from one end of India to the other, the answer ultimately reaches Kohat!

Little wonder if the attempt of the Viceroy to run a straight line through all these complicated arrangements should have aroused numerous objections. The proposed frontier reforms necessarily touched many interests. Few men, however, possessed more tactful power of reducing friction to a minimum than Colley. The quiet enthusiasm of his nature, the absence of all self-seeking or aggressive personal assertion, inspired feelings of respect, often of personal attachment, and went far to smooth difficulties. All had gone well at Peshawur. The frontier officers and he had parted in mutual friendliness and esteem. Writing of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, he says:

> I may mention that I have been much struck with

Egerton's loyalty. . . . He has done his very best to further what he believed to be the wishes of the Government, and I cannot but attribute the thoroughly friendly way in which my mission has been received to the tone he has taken in the matter.[1]

Leaving Peshawur when the conference was finished, Colley proceeded to Kohat, riding through the celebrated pass, that scene of so much border warfare since the days of the Sikh war; and thence, following the line blockading the Jowaki tribe, by the Swat frontier to Marden, and back to Simla on October 11.

About this time the correspondence contains allusions to Colley's acceptance of the private secretaryship, the principal post on the staff of the Governor-General:

Your letter interrupted me in the midst of a voluminous report on the Punjab Frontier tribes and our dealings with them, and furnishes materials for a letter almost as long if I had time to write it. I am not going home after all—at least, not for good. The Staff College was offered me; at least, I might have had it had I wished. But I have accepted the private secretaryship, and remain out here as long as Lord Lytton does. The private secretaryship to the Viceroy is a different appointment from ordinary private secretaryships, even to Cabinet Ministers, as you may suppose from the fact that the salary used to be 5,000*l.* a year, and even now, though reduced (through the fall of the rupee), is about 3,000*l.* a year. It is, in fact, a recognised position of considerable power and influence, and full of very interesting, though very hard, work. But I still hope to run home for a few weeks before settling down in my new appointment, and hope to be in England about the middle of January.[2]

Early in November the Viceroy travelled from Simla to Mussorie, a mountain march between the

[1] Kohat, October 1, 1877, to Lord Lytton.
[2] Simla, October 22, 1877, to Miss Hamilton.

sources of the Ganges and the Jumna; on one side the snow-clad Himalayas, and on the other the great Indian plain. Calcutta was reached early in December, and then, after a couple of very busy weeks spent in clearing off all official work, Colley started on a short leave of absence to England. Just before sailing, news reached him of trouble among his old Kaffir tribes on the Bashee River. A quarter of a century had gone by since the last Kaffir war. But a new hand was now on the helm, and already the ship was beginning to move uneasily in the rising gale. Sir Bartle Frere, sent to the Cape in the previous March as Governor and High Commissioner, decreed that henceforth 'there was to be no clan, no chieftain,' in South Africa. One single political interest must rule from the Zambesi to the Cape of Storms. The annexation of the Transvaal on April 12, 1877, had been followed by that of Kaffraria. The Idutsha reserve where Colley had spent so much of his early service was included in these annexations, and so, by a strange coincidence, a brawl upon the Bashee River set spark to a series of South African wars, including the overthrow of the Zulu power, and thus indirectly leading to the tragedy of Majuba Hill.

Late in December Colley left India on a three months' leave of absence. He had a busy and varied programme to carry out; high officials to be interviewed, questions of policy to be discussed with that freedom of remark and admission of object difficult save by word of mouth.

And in his personal life he was about to take an important step. 'If you feel writing inclined,' he had written to a lady with whom he had long corresponded,

'a letter to me at Aden (of course, not in the Viceroy's bag) would help very pleasantly to carry me through the Red Sea.'[3] A few months later he would return to India through the Red Sea—with his wife, the writer of the letter to Aden.

[3] Simla, October 22, 1877, to Miss Hamilton.

CHAPTER XI

THE AFGHAN CRISIS

Political interviews—Marriage—Letters from Lord Lytton—Return to India—Indian troops to Malta—Russian Mission to Kabul—Correspondence with Cavagnari—Sir Neville Chamberlain's Embassy—War with Afghanistan.

In a letter to Lady Lytton from Madras, and with reference to his new appointment, Colley wrote:

You know what the army has been and is to me. I have often said it answered the place of a wife to me. I can always, and under all circumstances, fall back on it, and feel sure of finding interest and comfort in devoting myself to it—and it has always treated me so well![1]

Four months had elapsed. The private secretaryship had been accepted on condition of freedom in the event of war,[2] and war was a contingency which in the political situation then existing might at any moment arise; nevertheless, the idea that the army was enough for a soldier, that it filled the place of wife and home, did not long survive in Colley's mind; for there can be little doubt that, although he left India on this short leave of absence not actually engaged to the lady who was soon to become his wife, he had pretty well determined that it would not

[1] August 19, 1877, to Lady Lytton.

[2] In September he had written to Sir Garnet Wolseley: 'I have made the same conditions as before—to be free to leave for any active service, or if you want me.'

be his fault if he did not return to India as a married man. The letter he had asked for met him at Aden, and on the last day of the year he wrote again—a long letter written in the unwonted leisure of the sea voyage, and touching on matters of 'inner thought,' as he called them, matters usually absent even from his most intimate correspondence. An earlier letter from his friend had been answered in India somewhat hurriedly—

> Because I felt that if I let my mind run wild, and launched out on the interesting questions, my poor work would go to the bad, at a time when I was particularly hard pressed, so I brought your letter on board ship with me to answer when I was sure of time.

He then passes on to the questions of inner thought referred to above.

> The universal adaptability of religion to all minds. To the lowest order of minds it presents itself in the form of fear—fear of 'divine revenge,' in this world it may be, or at any rate future punishment. To others it presents itself in the form of obedience. To others in the form of love—that is the essence of Christ's teaching. To others in the form of widened sympathy, the 'enthusiasm of humanity,' also a large element in Christ's teaching, now rather taken up by the freethinkers and positivists. To others in the form of duty, often hard and stern. To others in the form of the highest æsthetic culture. To others, as to you, in the form of a passionate faith in, and devotion to, good; a desire to do right for right's sake. I think religion contains all these, and through one or other of them it comes within the reach of every mind.
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> . . . It has often been an interesting study to me to observe how the different aspects of religion are brought forward in different teachings. Christ's was essentially love—love towards one another, or widened sympathy, and a more reverential love towards God; and His death introduced an

additional element of love—passionate love to Himself. You must have met many men, as I have, whose whole religion consists of this passionate love to Christ. Every act is good or bad according as it will be pleasing or displeasing to Him, cause Him pleasure or pain. Love was the special character of His teaching, its essence and power, and as far as I know it had never been so put forward before.

. . . But one might go on for ever tracing out the various forms in which religion and goodness appeal, and why different forms have had most power at different times. All may be abused as well as used.

. . . But I believe, in the main, religious earnestness, earnestness in good, does good in whatever form it shows itself. X. . . . stared in astonishment to hear me defend Moody and Sankey against a number of ridiculers, and say that I believed them to be honest, really good men, and doing a great deal of good. But I would equally have defended an earnest disbeliever against Moody and Sankey's sweeping condemnations.

It may be want of imagination and the practical turn of my mind, or it may be that as a youngster I so hopelessly bewildered my mind over these sort of questions, but I feel no particular curiosity to solve the problems of the unknowable, nor that indignant impatience which I think it is Hume expresses: 'We go through the world asking questions to which we are vouchsafed no reply. . . .'

At the end of this long letter, written on the voyage home, comes the following sentence:

We are due in England about January 13, and I expect to be in Ireland about the end of January; and having risked one snubbing with this letter I shall probably risk another by taking the opportunity of a visit to Glenmalyre to pay you one, unless the result of this venture is such as to discourage another![3]

The result of the venture must have been en-

[3] London, 1878, to Miss Hamilton.